

## RESEARCH METHODS IN TOURISM

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**Keywords:** quantitative method, qualitative method, research, tourism.

Cuvinte cheie: metoda cantitativă, metoda calitativă, cercetare, turism.

### **ABSTRACT:**

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Science and its development has been a priority of human society by centuries. The human society increment dues to scientific progress and advanced research in this domain. Geography promoted as science, and also tourism geography, one of its branch, possess their own research tools which analyze the two main types of resources: natural and man-made. In the research process, the tourism geography uses traditional geographical methods (observation, analysis, synthesis) and specific methods as well. One of the most commonly used classification of specific methods is the one that focusses on quantitative and qualitative methods, each of them having their own specific tools of research. Regarding qualitative methods we centered our attention on interviw method, focus-group, and document analysis; in point of quantitative methods, the statistical method and the model method (touristic flow model, territorial model, theoretical model of settlement, etc) preempt an distinguished role in the research domain.

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### **1. Introduction**

Tourism as a complex process has its operation based on natural and human resources, elements that constitute the most important attraction factor. Generator human factor is one that leverages the resources, in turn providing new resources and other services (Hapenciuc V., 2003).

Tourism activity was defined as the activity of a person who travels and has a residence in places other than those usually frequented, for no more than one consecutive year for leisure, business or other purposes - UN World Tourism Organization, 1994 - (The Dictionary of Human Geography, 5th edition, 2009). At the same time is a mass socio-economic phenomenon characteristic of urban-industrial civilization, which takes place in the interdependent relationship between geographical environment and society, consisting of the tourist product consumption in various geographical areas and in different units of time as a result of voluntary movements of individuals outside the productive activities or duties, leading to physical and mental recovery (Efros V., 2002).

Of course, throughout its emergence and crystallization have been countless authors who have attempted to define tourism / the tourist, and whoever tries to achieve this issue can not be limited to a single definition. Boyer (1996) even wrote that "whoever wants to write about tourism, the more difficult it is to define it." Here for example as tourist was defined by WTO in 1978: "any person

who is outside their current residence for a period of at least 24 hours (or overnight) and four months for the following reasons: pleasure (holidays and weekends), health (termalism, thalassotherapy, etc..), any assignments or meetings (congresses, seminars, pilgrimages, sporting events, etc..), business travel, professional travel, school trips, etc ... " (Muntele I., 2003).

To observe and understand what is happening in the world around is an innate human capacity and an act of survival. It speaks, in this case, of common knowledge, accessible to all, which does not require special training or tools suitable for a particular purpose. On the other hand, we can identify the scientific knowledge, deliberate action subject to clear rules and clear purposes having well defined finalities (Curelaru M., 2003).

In its complexity, the phenomenon of tourism is a multidisciplinary field disputed by geographers, economists, sociologists, psychologists and anthropologists. Tourism research has created such tension and brings together two research categories: academics and those in the branch?, generating the so-called paradox of "tourism as industry" and "tourism as a problem" (Burns, 1999). Franklin and Crang (2001) argues that the phenomenon of research interest grew and grew so that it became confused and stucked. They argue as follows:

1. While tourism seen economically and socially has grown so much in recent decades, researchers have struggled to keep pace with this growth, which led to a situation where tourism studies have attempted to only record the large increasing , resulting in only a lot of case studies, records of cases and variations.
2. Most of the studies that are outside the functional economical areas and take tourism into consideration only for planning and strategy purposes, were dominated by a small core of scholars whose work has tended to lock in its explanations, standard analysis and fundamental established ideas .
3. Tourism research approach was as fragmented as the tourist industry itself. The fragmented nature study affect both demand and supply of tourism , and tourism is seen as a heterogeneous series of events, located where the destinations are subject to the impact of external factors ... and these factors are themselves a series of events lists, heterogeneous travel, arrivals, activities, acquisitions and departures .... with the tourist who in turn is seen as a "harsh reality".
4. In another article Cooper (2002) begins with a sentence from the Australian Institute of Commerce (AIC): the research, be it the best in the world, has limited value if its results fall on the commercial market place to maximize its opportunities. He asserts that "knowing management provides to tourism research both a complementary and contemporary approach , which is not highlighted in the academic tourism literature" (Ritchie B. et al, 2005).

In conclusion, the truth is somewhere in between, and the phenomenon of tourism has to be studied both in academia and the "industry" areas. Academic research theorizes, classifies, defines, positions and disturbs all theoretical valences of this phenomenon, the industry takes full bag theory into practice and where it acquires pecuniary value.

Research in tourism, as well as in the entire geographical area is based on three main pillars, three general principles which in turn develop specific methods and the geography of tourism (Table1).

**Table 1.** Processing by P. Cocean and colab., 2005.

| PRINCIPLES  | METHODS     | MEANS       | MODELING           |
|-------------|-------------|-------------|--------------------|
| Spatiality  | Observation | Description | Descriptive model  |
| Causality   | Analysis    | Explanation | Mathematical model |
| Integration | Summary     | Hierarchy   | The mapping        |

- Observation method "refers to an extremely wide range of processes carried out in the regional field, both in a selective, specific, systemic component, and especially at the level of interaction relationships between them" (Cocean, 2002).
  - Analysis method refers to "geographical reality research by decomposing the whole into parts by removing the complex mechanism of the system to reach an understanding of each party to the characteristics and function" (Iuga Ion quoting Ion Donisa, 1977).
  - Synthesis method is based on analysis results, that are all exploited in a way as arguments for developing hypotheses and legalities" (Cocean P., 2002).
- These are, briefly, three general methods of study in geography. One of the most frequently used classification of research methods is that in qualitative methods and quantitative methods.

## 2. Qualitative Methods

Qualitative research techniques include both a series of steps and a research group. Often misunderstood as a simple research without numbers, it is in fact the basis of human geography involving a plethora of different points of theoretical research, methodological and philosophical, which together seek to address questions of meaning (Dydia Delycer, Encyclopedia of Huma Geography, 2006). Theorists of these methods highlight the "subjectiveness" relative to the researcher, which is apparent in the way that approaches the subject studied, but also in the results that are obtained. Each scientist, humanist or physical geography, because of certain causes (past, education, gender, principles, beliefs, etc..) "Bears" with him in this process a dose of subjectivity (Encyclopedia of Human Geography, p.392).

There are several different methods and qualitative criteria to classify them. Some of them are confined to enumerate and describe them individually, while others, such as Winchester (2000), notes three categories of qualitative methods: oral (unstructured interview, focus group method, case study), textual analysis (content analysis documents) and direct observation (ethnographic method). (Dictionary of Human Geography, p.605).

## 2. 1. The interview

The interview is the method by which the researcher collects information directly from the respondent. Alain Blanchet defines the interview as " a conversation between two people, an interviewer and interviewee, managed and recorded by the interviewer. The purpose of this talk is to encourage the production of a speech on a topic defined by a research framework "(Blanchet al., 1985). Research interview is a technique for obtaining, through questions and answers, verbal information from individuals and human groups in order to verify hypotheses or to scientifically describe the social sciences phenomena . It involves the formulation of an instruction, building and planning a thematic guide to listening and intervention strategies (Curelaru M., 2003).

### a) Semi-structured interview

Assume a predefined interview guide with questions, but allow the interviewer to deviate from the plan to introduce the specific themes. The interviewer introduces the theme, then guides the discussion by asking specific questions.

### b) Unstructured Interview

Assumes that the researcher talks totally free with some members of the public concerned with one issue. Sometimes the issue is not given beforehand but is discovered through such discussions.

Unstructured interview is usually carried out in several meetings and a meeting can take several hours. The most typical is the realization of a personal interview, by direct contact, "face to face ".

Advantages of interviews:

- investigated people's attitudes and emotions can be explored in detail and lifelike without resorting to the default alternative answers;
- motivation and resistance can be determined from certain areas, countries, products, or services;
- analysis of complex research topics or new problems that were not initially sufficient information;
- development of trust between interviewer and subject to be able to approach certain topics considered "taboo."

## 2.2. Focus group (focus group interview)

A focus group is defined as an interacting group of individuals who have some common interests or characteristics, a group assembled by a moderator, who uses the group and its interactions as a way to get information about a specific problem.

Experts recommended that the focus group questions to be relatively few (7-10 otherwise the time during the discussion would be unacceptably higher, which ultimately means failure of the interview), to be well chosen and formulated, and for the questions that were not provided in the guide to reserve 10 to 15 minutes at the end of interview. .In North America, the typical focus group lasts 2 hours and is conducted with 8 to 10 participants.

Tourism research studies that use focus group technique is carried out with at least 4-6 or more discussion groups. It was found that the focus group consisting of 7-10 people who are not familiar with each other and have certain characteristics in common subject-related research, provides a sufficient number of participants to achieve diversity of views and to keep the discussion under control so that all people should tell their point of view. Members of the focus group can be, for example, people who have gone through an event together, the consumers of a product or service, visitors to a country, participants in an activity / event etc. (wordpress.com, 2008)

Advantages of this technique:

The method allows obtaining information of great depth about the motivations and behavior of interest groups. Most often, focus groups are used in conjunction with other methods and techniques, often for:

- Identifying problems and questions to be included in a quantitative survey questionnaire
- Obtaining suggestions for interpreting the data collected in quantitative studies
- Validation of results from previous studies
- pragmatic advantages of this technique for research are: flexibility, fast results and reduced costs.

3. Content analysis of documents (Iuga, PhD. 2009) is an indirect method which consists in the accumulation of information about the natural or the anthropic which holds the phenomenon under investigation. The analysis is done before the field trip by trying to separate the information gathered to date of any circumstances which might arise with new insight. Bibliographic documentation is needed is the geography of tourism, especially when the process that has been studied has a past and a trend removed.

4. The observation, as a method of scientific inquiry, is defined as activity tracking and systematic description of phenomena and events taking place in tourism. Qualitative observation can be non-participating and participating . Observation is non-participating when the researcher chooses to observe the process / phenomenon without participating and studies it from outside. He is observing more than he is taking part in the process.

Participatory observation implies active involvement in the phenomenon studied. It is the most qualitative of all research methods and allows the researcher to discover detailed information about thoughts, feelings and behavior of those involved in tourism activity and the stages and the details of the studied event. It can be carried out successfully using covert observation (Researchers identity and research purposes are hidden, for example to get closer to the volume of tourist flows, features, prices advertised, the degree of customer satisfaction, the researcher can engage/can get hired/ in that unit) or opened observation (the identity of the researcher is revealed in the studied group , but sometimes nature research is hidden).

A useful tool is the observation sheet, comprising a list of items that can be recorded during the observation (wordpress.com, 2008).

### 3. Quantitative Methods

Mathematics has always been the basis of geographical practices. It argued for centuries providing technical development of cartography (especially geometry and trigonometry) relating to the construction of maps, in determining the exact location (by latitude and longitude) and translate these locations by conventional signs on the map.

We define quantitative methods as a collection of techniques and methods used by researchers to assess or measure social phenomena. These methods describe, explain, analyze and provide predictions on the observed phenomena or behavior. Statistics and model are two ways in which these methods are highlighted (Encyclopedia, p.393).

The Year 1945 is very important in the development of quantitative methods. The years that followed have brought great changes in this direction, the period which is called "quantitative revolution." Those who have led this process were a number of U.S. institutions (University of Washington, Seattle) and the United Kingdom. These two core research have focused on different quantitative methodologies: some have stressed the importance of mathematical reasoning and representation (including mathematical modeling), and others used statistical procedures that were derived from empirical research (Dictionary, p.607).

Both the statistical method and model one are often used as research methods in tourism.

3.1. "Statistical method is the scientific way of conducting a study of the behavior of a population, trying to find general characteristics for a particular area, where tourism is the main purpose to provide an overview that will generate the forecast decision-making interest (Hapenciuc, 2003, p.22).

Information, fuel statistics, is taken directly to specialized statistical institutions to record all censuses and provide full details on certain issues, or may be obtained through surveys and questionnaires. If censuses can provide more quantitative information, the qualitative side s can be revealed with the investigation. Notice so that the statistical method has both quantitative and qualitative role.

Lupu N. details the two issues and divides them into two categories (Hapenciuc V., 2003, p.23): quantitative aspects (describe the intensity of each feature of a whole and refers to the number of tourists arriving in a given area, duration of stay, frequency, seasonality, destination - geographical distribution or the form of chosen accommodation ) and qualitative (customer structure, by age, socio-professional categories and income groups, the form of travel, means of transportation used, the gateway to the product-through the reservations office , travel agency, etc.).

At country level the research can reach to three issues: national tourism (tourists mobility within national territory) country tourists going abroad and international tourism (residents members of a foreign country coming to visit a region or area of that country).

In the survey, should be always taken into account "likelihood" of information and it's accuracy, as long as it is taken only from a sample, be it

representative, and relies on the honesty of those interviewed. Also, to obtain information varies from one country to another, in some the statistical information is missing for long periods.

After Baron R. (Travel and Tourism Data, Cambridge, England, Euromonitor Publication, 1989) the most circulated statistical information in tourism is: border input statistics (registration numbers and special surveys conducted to obtain information on the tourists country of origin, duration of stay, purpose of visit, means of transportation), accommodation statistics, statistics about information on means of transport, equipment and other activities (national parks and amusement parks, sports and museums, etc.), various investigations on family and individual (involving the use of the panels, etc.) economic censuses and other useful statistics, for example, knowledge of turnover of tourist revenue and corporate profits (Hapenciuc V., 2003, p.24-25).

A more in-depth research study of tourism requires studying the tourism indicator system. These indicators process and provide detailed information for more detailed tourism sectors (Hapenciuc V., 2004).

a) Indicators of the economic potential and of the tourism supply are divided into the material basis (volume of fixed capital and fixed assets-level structure of the renewal of fixed assets, degree of wear, depreciation rule, offer theoretical maximum effective bid / real ) and employment indicators (statistical indicators of population and employment structure, indicators of the labor movement of livestock, use of indicators of working time).

b) Indicators of economic performance (value): receipts from tourism indicators, tourism expenditure indicators, indicators of economic efficiency.

c) Indicators of tourist traffic, tourism demand indicators.

d) Quality indicators of economic efficiency (Hapenciuc V., 2004).

The statistical method adds a great tool for effective and efficient in tourism research: the computer software SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences) one of the most common computer programs, specialized in data analysis. The program is used today in marketing, experimental research, education, health. In addition to statistical analysis possible, the program has strong components for data management (selection, reconfiguration, creating new data) and data documentation (metadata is a dictionary that retains characteristics of the data). It can add flexibility of data types accepted as the way to build reports.

### 3.2. The tourist model

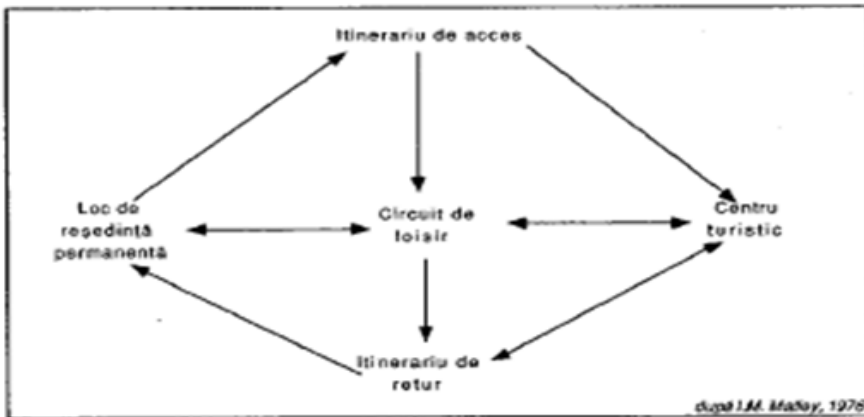
The tourist model provides or rather say proposes a theoretical and conceptual study of spatial dynamics of tourism. The main types of touristic models are the tourist flows models, and territorial- spacial.

*3.2.1 The tourist flows models* using the classical scheme, origin-destination route, emphasizing one or two of these elements.

The main categories of models are: models that focus on travel or itinerary; models that highlight the relationship airtime - the reception area (origin-destination); structural models; evolutionary models.

The travel tourist flow models seek to explain these phenomena with mechanisms to facilitate understanding. The main models are (adapted by Muntele I., 2003):

a) The Mariot (1976) highlights two places between which runs three routes (round, back, and recreational). Round route is connecting the origin to destination and the recreational implies the use of infrastructure involving stopping and using of tourism infrastructure specific to parkings or leisure parks (Figure 1).



**Fig. 1.** Muntele processing Mariot model on tourist flows between the two localities (place of permanent residence, successful route, leisure circuit, tourist center, return route).

b) Campbell's model is based on the idea of "tour" (visiting several places during the journey). Starting from an urban center to reach more additional routes during the route and the route of departure coincides with the return (Figure 2).

c) the volume of tourist flow analysis based on the principle that the volume decreases in direct proportion to the distance from the emitting regions due to increased consumption of time, money and energy. Green and Wall (1979) will say the opposite, namely that the potential recreation activity increases with distance.

d) The Miossec model (1976) supports the idea of a "core transmitter" surrounded by concentric regular zones (four successive belts). Within these belts show up a series of "positive distortions" which widens the belt due to a lower standard of living of the area which involves a reduction in interest expenses, a favorable climate and historical ties.

It also features "negative deformations" that narrow the belt by the presence in the area of hard porous borders, of a conflict or a climate of mistrust (Figure 3).

e) Yokeno's model (1974) somehow resembles that of Miossec and explains the deformations of concentric zones by specific tourism in the center of origin, communications network layout and the price differential of interest.



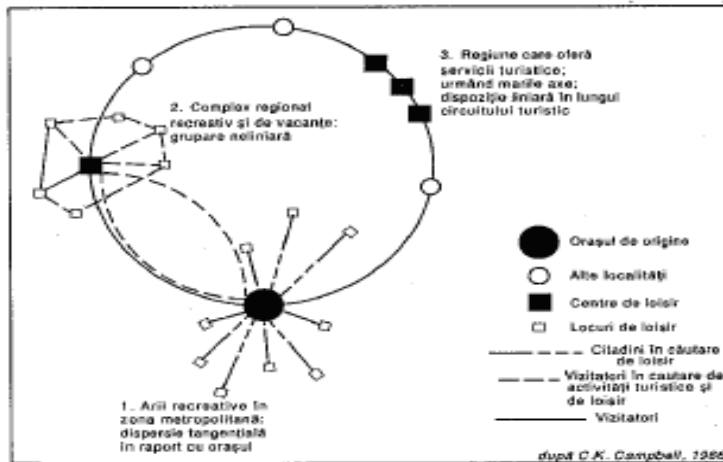


Fig. 2. Processing Campbell's model on leisure trips and vacations (Campbell, 1966, quote by Muntele I., 2003).

1. Recreational areas in the metropolitan area: tangential dispersion in relation to town
  2. Recreational and Regional Leisure Complex
  3. Region that offers great travel services following axes: linear device along the tourist circuit
- City of Origin
  - other locations
  - leisure centers
- townspeople/citizens in search of leisure  
 -.- visitors seeking tourist and leisure activities  
 — Visitors

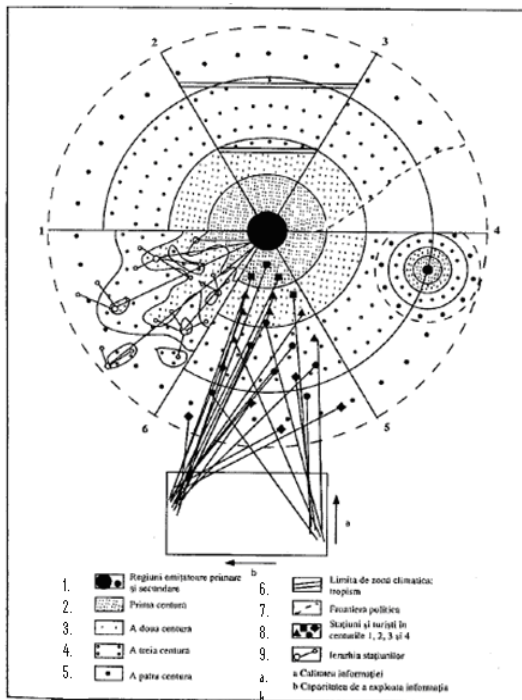


Fig. 3. Muntele (2003) processing Miossec's model on space tourism.

### 3.2.2 Models of tourist flows origin-destination:

a) Thurot's model is based on the existence of national interest in interconnected systems.

b) Lundgren's model stresses that the tourist centers are playing a central role, delimiting four categories of tourist destinations: metropolitan, urban outlying, remote areas, natural sites.

c) Pearce's model (Geografía mundial del turismo, 2001) brings to the fore the urban plan and assigns this both as a function of transmitting and receiving. He also cautions that it's a must to make the distinction between the following terms: "tourism in the city" and "tourism cities". Following this idea, Pearce shows a general functional zonality of the tourist town based on natural resources and man ( Geografía Mundial, p.154) (Figure 4).

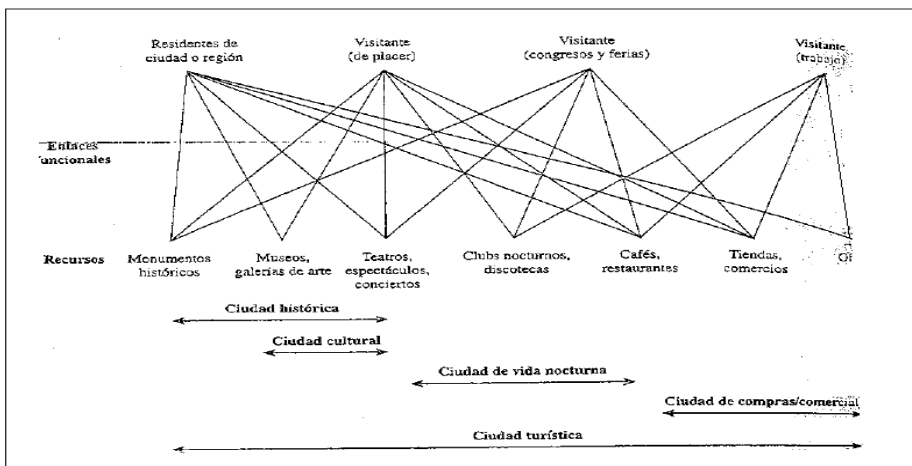


Fig. 4. Barrado(2001) processing Burtenshaw's (1991) functional areas in touristic city.

### 3.2.3 Structural models of tourist flows (Muntele I.,2003):

a) Britton's model (1982) shows that tourism market is concentrated in the ascending hierarchy, from the local to regional, national, international.

b) Cazes's model (1980) scheme is based on origin-destination itinerary, where the "multinational trading system" plays a very important role. Evolutionary models of tourist flows(Muntele I.,2003)

a) study of mutations induced by the phenomenon of tourism by which Turner and Ash (1975) introduced the term "peripheral's leisure" which is an inherent result of the development of urban industrial society, which needs a protective tourist belt.

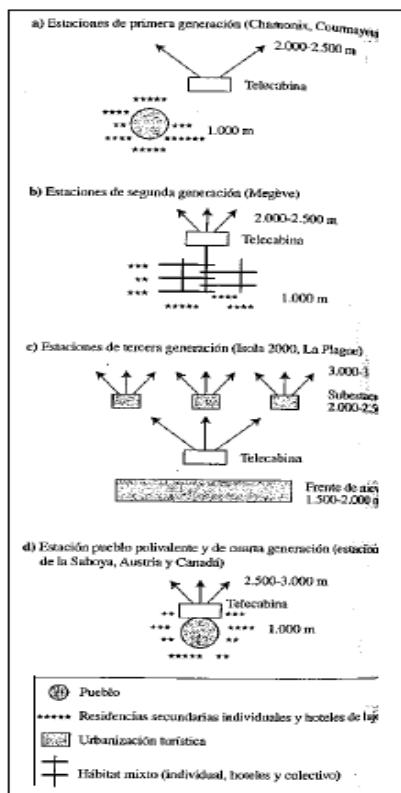
b) The evolution of Plog's (1973) highlights the motivation of tourists, who according to the means of transportation and forms of tourism are:

- Psicocentrics (shy, not adventurous and prefers organized tourism);
- Alocentrics (confident, adventurous, open to the outside).

c) The spatio-temporal evolution model of international tourism (Gormsen, 1981) addresses the corresponding changes chrono-spatial dynamics of regions'

formation process , the structure and diversification of tourist flows hotel infrastructure, generating an evolution of the tourism phenomenon in " concentric waves".

d) Development of tourist behavior in parallel with the progress of the transportation Network and the infrastructure accommodation (Miossec, 1977).

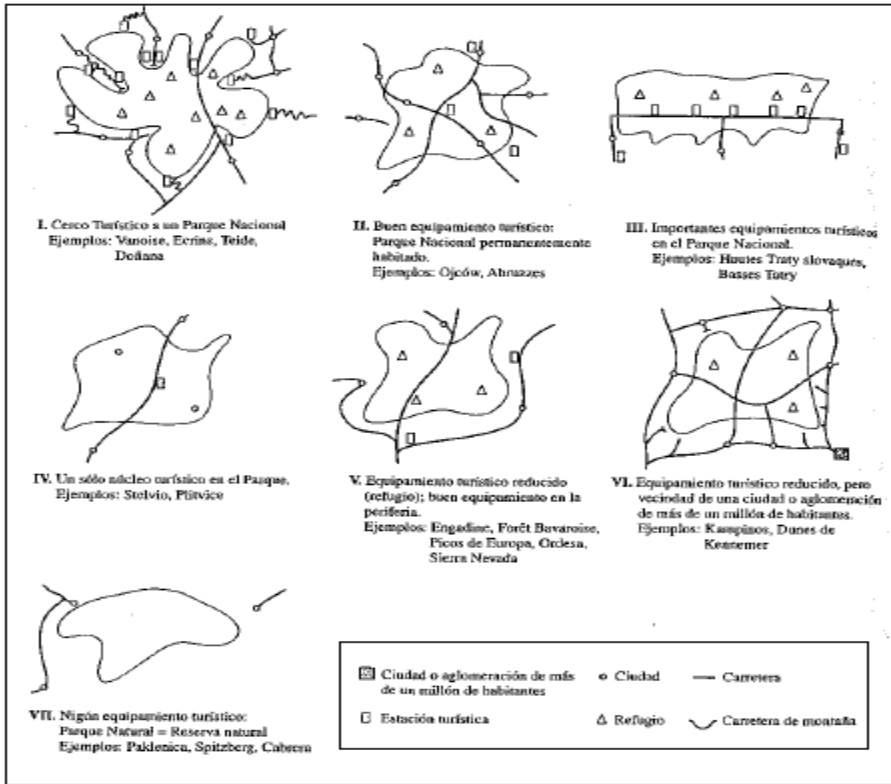


3.2.4. The Models of tourism development can be analyzed in several ways: one is that of Douglas Pearce that proposes a simple classification of the agents in charge of tourism development process in a particular area / resort (catalytic model and integrated model ) and that of Jean-Pierre LG (1990) which establishes a typology of ski resorts mainly based on geographical criteria (winter sports resort polynuclear bipolar first category/ class, bipolar and polynuclear winter sports resort second class/category, partially urbanized and with and extensive infrastructure , winter sports resort, unipolar and mononuclear third category, with integrated territorial subunits , and the fourth category of bipolar and polynuclear rural resort (Geografía mundial, p.132) (Figure 5).

**Fig. 5.** Barrado processing Lozato-Giotart's (1990) types of spatial structures of touristic resorts for winter sports.

- a) first class resorts (Chamonix, Courmayeur)
- b) second class resorts (Megeve)
- c) third class resorts (Isola 2000, La Plagne)
- d) polyvalent village resorts of fourth class (Saboya resorts, Austria, Canada)
- village
- \*\*\*\* individual secondary residences and luxury hotels
- touristic cit
- ‡ mixt habitat (individual, hotels and colectivo)

3.2.5 *The Tourism coordination models* in ecotourism have in mind the administration and organization of natural reserves, protected areas and their surrounding areas. Some reservations are surrounded by famous tourist resorts, where themselves are highly attraction tourist centers and others to the extreme have a special status where the access is very restricted (Geografía mundial, p.146) (Figure 6).

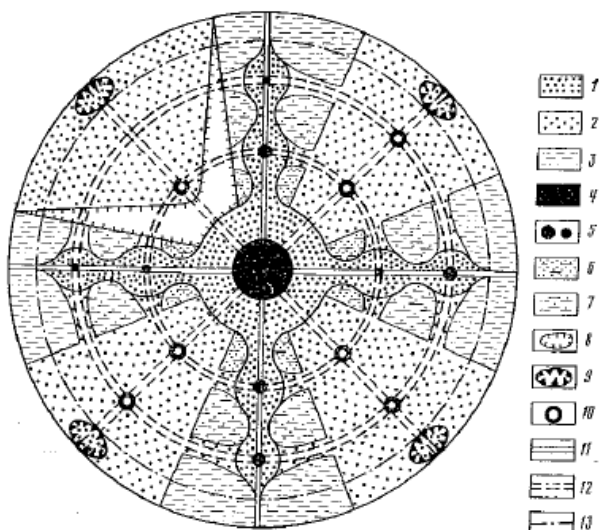


**Fig. 6.** Barrado processing G. Riches (1992) Graphic models of touristic coordination in european National Parks.

I.Touristic center of a National Park. Example: Vanois, Ecrins, Teide, Donana; II.Fine touristic equipment: National Park permanently inhabited: Ojcow, Abruzzes; III.Important touristic equipment from a National Park: Hautes Traty, Basses Tatry;IV. One touristic core in a Park: Stelvio, Plitvice;V. Reduced touristic equipment (refuge); good equipment on pheriphery: Engadine, Foret, Bavaroise, Peaks of Europe, Ordesa, Sierra Nevada; VI. Reduced touristic equipment, from an urban neighbourhood with a population of more than one million people: Kampinos, Kennemer Dunes; VII. No touristic equipment; National Park = National Reservation: Paklenica, Spitzberg, Cabrera;

□ city with a population of more than one million people  
 ● city  
 — road  
□ touristic resort  
 △ refuge  
 - - - mountain road

3.2.6 *The theoretical model of solving problems* in tourism (Territorialnaia Organizatzia Otdyha Mosvy Neselenia and Moskovskoi Oblasty, 1986, p.150) (Figure 7).



**Fig. 7** Territorialnaia Organizatzia Otdyha Mosvy Neselenia and Moskovskoi Oblasty. Editura Nauka, 1986

1-3 *Single purpose areas*

1-recreation and rest for one day

2 leisure and recreation for 2 days or a longer period of time (accommodations, hostels, hotels, campsites, rest houses, etc.).

3-agricultural areas

4-10 *multifunctional areas, urban built-up, recreational*

4 Moscow

5th Moscow region cities

6 areas for recreational and agricultural (predominant types of entertainment centers are represented by holiday homes associations , camps for children, Recreation)

7-land recreation areas

8 special recreational areas: hunting farms, protected areas (predominant type of accommodations- fisherman and hunter's house , hotels)

9 - National Parks

10 tourist centers (predominant type of accommodations, hotels, motels, hostels, campsites)

11-12 *Communications Infrastructure*

11 multifunctional railroads and highways

12-way access / tourism roads

13-limit of Moscow's region

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