



Panel discussion

# Economy and identity. Tourism industries

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ADRIANA DELGADO

The economy of identity is a recent concept, though it is becoming increasingly strong and relevant as it is a new way of conceiving and tackling the challenges of a global world in crisis that is looking for new answers. Tourism as an overall service industry is developing a strategic role in its drive for diverse industries and business activities (cultural industries, gastronomy, fashion, design, agriculture, arts and crafts) converging in a common action line to project identity as a source of wealth for countries.

Economy and identity, specifically in tourism, were the topic at a meeting in the last edition of the Catalan Summer University in Prada de Conflent, in which the minister of Innovation, Universities and Enterprise took part, together with experts in different related fields.



The Catalan Summer University in Prada de Conflent organised in the last summer a panel discussion titled «Economy and identity: local answers to global change» with the aim of dealing with opportunities raised at local and supralocal level in the light of current change, based on strengthening the own singularity and identity of each territory and its society.

The meeting was opened by the minister of Innovation, Universities and Enterprise, Josep Huguet i Biosca, and started with the keynote speech by doctor Rubén Lois González, full professor of Geography and Geographic Analysis at the Faculty of Geography and History of the University of Santiago, who explained his ideas based on his experience as

a former Director General of **Galicia Tourism**. The participants of the following panel discussion were Oriol Junqueras, historian, professor at the Autonomous University of Barcelona and Member of European Parliament («The new identities»), Artur Duart, director of **Interpreta Cultura** («Cultural interpretation»), Xavier Nadal, president of **Pime-Cava** («Wine tourism and denominations of origin»), Pep Palau, wine and gastronomy consultant and director of Pep Palau Von Arendt & Associats («Gastronomy»), Jordi Tresserras, doctor of Geography and History and academic coordinator of the Cultural Tourism post-graduate course at the University of Barcelona («Identity: culture and territory»), and Josep Chias, expert in tourism



### Rubén C. Lois González

Doctor in Geography. Full professor of Geography at the University of Santiago de Compostela.

A former Director General of Tourism of the Government of Galicia, executive member of the «Cultural Geography» and «Urban Geography» commissions of the International Geographical Union (IGU).

He has been a guest professor at the universities of Le Mans, Caen and Toulouse-Le Mirail (France) and Bergen (Norway).



### Oriol Junqueras

Doctor in History of Economic Thought and degree in Modern and Contemporary History from the Autonomous University of Barcelona.

Professor at the Autonomous University of Barcelona and independent Member of European Parliament, elected on behalf of Esquerra Republicana de Catalunya.

He has worked for different media and authored, coauthored and introduced numerous books.



### Artur Duart

Degree in Geography and History from the University of Barcelona.

Founding partner of Grup Bloc, director of Magma Serveis Culturals SL and director of Interpreta Cultural Projects SL, a consulting firm specialised in museology and strategic plans related with culture and cultural tourism.

He is also professor at the master course in restoration of architectural and civil engineering sites at the Polytechnic University of Catalonia.

marketing and director of Chias Marketing («Tourism marketing with identity»).

Minister Huguet opened the event reminding that tourism in the 21st century is sustainable, in words of the **World Tourism Organization** that «contributing to fully develop the territory and

promote its identity». In this respect, he pointed towards one weakness and one strength. The strength is that Catalonia starts from a strong tourist business base, while the weakness is the risk due to being «often positioned according to indiscriminate mass tourism, which creates some patterns that are difficult to change».



### Xavier Nadal

Enologist from the University of Dijon and degree in Functional Area Management, a specialisation of Economy and Finance, from ESADE.

Director of Caves Nadal.

President of PimeCava since 2006.



### Pep Palau

Gastronomist.

Director of the Gastronomic Forums of Girona and Santiago de Compostela. He fostered the Cuisine Groups of Catalonia movement and is a gastronomic advisor to several companies and organisations.

A teacher and speaker at conferences and regular collaborator at different media, having authored several books.



### Jordi Tresserras

Doctor in Geography and History from the University of Barcelona.

Academic coordinator of the Cultural Management post-degree programme, member of the Doctorate Commission of Cultural and Heritage Management at the University of Barcelona and president of IBERTUR - Sustainable Heritage, Tourism and Development Network.

A former guest professor at New York University.



### Josep Chias

Doctor in Management Sciences, MBA from ESADE and Chemical Engineer from the Institut Químic de Sarrià.

Technical director of Chias Marketing Systems in Barcelona and member of the Advisory Council of the Spanish Centre of Tourism Knowledge and Intelligence.

A former professor at ESADE and holder of leading positions at Nestlé Spain, Bassat, Ogilvy & Mather and the Barcelona 1992 Olympic Office.

The top **tourism official at the Catalan government** pointed out that «there is a lot to do», especially compared with what great marketing and tourism engineering experts like France are doing. Mr Huguet explained that when he took over the Department of Innovation, Universities and Enterprise, he created a Subdirection of Programming that started working in managing the shift in the Catalan tourist model and promoting tangible and intangible heritage. The minister also invited to think over tourism management, placing the emphasis on the relation between public authorities and public and private companies, going for public-private cooperation creating positive dynamics and common benefits.

**Minister Huguet reminded that tourism in the 21st century is sustainable, the one «contributing to fully develop the territory and promote its identity».**

The speech by Rubén Lois González concentrated on identity as a value for tourism. Giving examples from Galicia based on his experience as a former Director General of Tourism, Mr Lois pointed out that as a geographer, he perceives the landscape as «a very important point within the distinctive traits of our discipline» and asserted that geographers are professionals working «in places having a given relevance, in specific identities, in small villages and in territorial diversity». He further said that we are living a time of globalisation and interdependence that is more evident than in business: «companies compete in a global scenario», although he made clear that a difference needs to be made between globalisation and uniformity.

Mr Lois stated that in this global scenario full of interrelations, it is necessary to single out the distinctive items or the specific territorial model that shall allow to be competitive and develop an economy of identity. He also perceives globalisation as «a return back to the place», «a more or less big portion of space with relevant subjective and affective values for a person or

group». In tourism, he pointed out, places are interpreted, promoted, packaged and intended to commercialise, with added value based on differentiation. A clear example is wine tourism. Mr Lois further explained that the value of experience and how this affects the position of tourism within business activities is also very relevant, for instance in purchasing clothes. «In a globalised environment, it is important to recover the personality of a place», he asserted.

After that, Mr Lois focused on identity as such. On the one hand, he singled out a rather classical culture or nation-based rationale, identifying peoples and territories, and on the other, another line based on the existence of territorial clusters or industrial districts. At this point, he pointed out that Catalonia is using the «landscape» concept differently from other territories like France and Italy, with a clear identity as an economic region.

**Rubén Lois González asserted that companies compete in a global scenario, although he made clear that a difference needs to be made between globalisation and uniformity.**

Mr Lois González also alerted that there has been an attempt, particularly by media, to create an identity at national level for some time, with the use especially of sports that is not real and does not work for tourism. He also pointed out that Spanish nationalism propelled by national institutions was being decidedly and firmly pushed.

Returning to successful tourist formulas, the former Director General of Tourism of Galicia recommended to relate the product with the territory, giving the example of France and the detailed maps of its territories in which there is most often a product related to a place. He also declared the interest of the notion relating identity with capacity of innovation and its contribution to the whole, for instance the technological

revolution and the creation of Nokia in Finland or the success of the textile industry in Galicia with cases like Zara.

He added that what relates a place to its population is the satisfaction of people when they consume products from their home or the wish of visitors to take some remembrance from there.

One of the main ideas expressed by Mr Lois was that new territory-based models need to link identity with sustainability and, related to this, with scenery, for the latter is linked with the whole historical construction of a territory out of cultural and iconic items, for instance the picture of Barcelona based on the grid created by Cerdà in the Eixample quarter or that of Bilbao based on the Guggenheim Museum.

All in all, Mr Lois González made it clear that identity and economy need to be related with each other, starting by identifying the degree of satisfaction of the local population with the place they live in and using items creating a clear identity, like language, to promote a place. He closed his speech asserting that new discourses of identity need to be created looking for the local scale, emphasising the efficiency of small countries and constantly resorting to own examples.

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The following panel discussion on «The different sides of the economy of identity» dealt with aspects related with history and etymology, cultural interpretation, enology and gastronomy, geography and marketing.

## «The new identities» by Oriol Junqueras

In his address titled «The new identities», the historian Oriol Junqueras asserted that a given identity acts as a «sufficiently closed network to exclude external competitors and give trust to those inside it». In his opinion, «networks offer advantages of scale as they reduce the information and control cost». In this respect, he reminded that punishment for cheating within this network is very harsh as it can bring about exclusion and the loss of business opportunities.

Mr Junqueras explained that «identity» means 'equality' in etymological terms, and that identities are extremely complex. This is why there are conflicts. There are certain cultural, religious, political or linguistic roles hard to understand, so «when we see any specific behaviour of a given community, we analyse them from a specific perspective, which is ours», he said.

**«We want to be original but not distant as we need to be understood. Being original means to return to the origin.»**

We all need communital elements with other members, he said: «we look for references in the past and the future», so questions as interesting as the wish of being original to be different but not distant come up, as we need to be understood. According to Mr Junqueras, originality occurs to seize the attention of others and being original means to return to the origin. It is here where the geographic perspective comes in. According to this historian, we claim the «gene», which in Latin means 'family and tradition', 'that intrinsic to ourselves'. «We are again confronted with ambivalence. Being ingenious means to be innovative, being born in freedom, being ingenuous, like the "gene" was being born free in Roman times»,

he explained. For this reason, Mr Junqueras concluded, the idea of identity and common freedom is derived from this, which applied to tourism creates a competitive singularisation and differentiation item for the marketplace.

## «Cultural interpretation» by Artur Duart

The director of Interpreta Cultura dealt with cultural interpretation as a tool to take advantage of heritage resources to prepare them for visitors under optimal conditions and allow their cultural consumption. According to Mr Duart, contents have largely stopped being exclusive to culture in its narrow sense as everybody has the capacity of creating and distributing them through the internet. This massive dissemination of contents opens a new opportunity for on-site culture, which needs to be reinforced by means of technological tools for communication and distribution of cultural contents. Mr Duart asserted that «this has to help us articulate and structure our social and cultural environment». Within what he called the «new world map of cultures», there is the possibility that Catalonia is kept out, so he advised to be more creative: «cultural reality is not only going to the museum, but culture is expressed in countless aspects, from the most traditional to the most modern ones».

**«Quality contents need to be created without denying the possibility of having fun, using technology to update or confer a value to a resource, but starting from the idea that museum interpretation is a tool to facilitate access to and knowledge of the resource», Artur Duart asserted.**

Cultural interpretation «needs to recover and interpret historical structures or buildings to save them from oblivion and take us to a specific

point in history, to a closer reality», Artur Duart explained. He pointed out that «quality contents need to be created without denying the possibility of having fun, using technology to update or confer a value to a resource, but starting from the idea that museum interpretation is a tool to facilitate access to and knowledge of the resource», while the internet needs to be the place allowing its conceptual dissemination.

The director of Interpreta Cultura asserted that the sun and beach tourism model is outdated and new tourists look for unique experiences. According to him, this is an opportunity to become known based on cultural and quality criteria interpreted in an orderly, organised and creative manner. An advanced country is also measured «by the state of its natural and cultural heritage and its level of interpretation and valorisation to be enjoyed».

## «Wine tourism and denominations of origin» by Xavier Nadal

In his speech on wine tourism and denominations of origin, Xavier Nadal explained the relevant economic and tourist role of wine tourism. As the president of PimeCava, the employers' organisation of the sparkling wine industry, Mr Nadal asserted that this branch is highly relevant in the economy of identity issue and remembered that the organisation he chairs was created on 8 February 2006 in order to represent the interests of the industry, which «after all, is to defend our identity through training to convey what we are and our singularity by means of a trading platform in the domestic and international market as well as wine tourism».

Mr Nadal pointed out that after laying the foundations, denominations of origin (DO) are having a bad time, «although it may not seem so». According to him, members of the industry

see very clearly that the great opportunity of winemakers and family businesses «is the strength of being united and cooperating based on wine tourism products», although they need to be pragmatic. «Business comes first», he declared.

**According to Mr Nadal, «the image at territory and country level is necessary, but we need companies and organisations behind with a certain entrepreneurial drive to structure initiatives».**

The president of PimeCava explained that they have been working in a wine tourism project for three years that started with the implementation of a strategic plan he considered a brainstorming item. Action is needed though. According to Mr Nadal, now is the time of bringing together the most active companies as the initiative is still in its beginnings. «But there is no other way», he acknowledged, and if it works, «the rest will join in». «We want to have a unique product», he said, referring to centenarian companies, having had two or three generations of owners, with a specific Penedès and Catalan identity.

Mr Nadal pointed out that he believes in collective strength and there is not much to do at individual level. «The image at territory and country level is necessary, but we need companies and organisations behind with a certain entrepreneurial drive to structure initiatives» so the country can develop faster.

Among the ingredients to his recipe, Mr Nadal quoted «doing things well» and «enjoying» in a moment in which the association is growing and has been instilled with a collective mindset. «We have it all in the Penedès county», he said, referring to the chances of tourism, though he concluded that it is also necessary to «convey the country-based idea outside the territory, have a generational feeling and an entrepreneurial mindset.».

## «Identity: culture and territory» by Jordi Tresserras

Jordi Tresserras' speech was based on identity as a changing phenomenon. Mr Tresserras explained that identity «allows to create an individual and collective identification link with a territory in which culture is a crucial ingredient to create a location spirit». Territorial identities are by definition dynamic and varying in an environment changing over history.

Mr Tresserras pointed out that the feeling of authenticity is associated to historical tradition but it can be recent, as is the case of drinking sparkling wine. According to him, «authenticity becomes what represents a reality accepted as an identity by the community». Icons also change and transition between what is considered identity and what not is complex.

**«Synergies need to be created to prevent making culture for tourism; a balance needs to be found so tourists can take part in the country's cultural life in the most sustainable way possible and participate in a meeting space.»**

Mr Tresserras stated that identity can create proposals based on emigration, the so-called «tourism of roots or genealogical tourism», though it can also «make a difference by suggesting project identities able to raise the interest of potential visitors». The Catalan identity features precisely incipient initiatives aimed at seizing Catalans as tourists, like the tourist brand «Le Pays Catalan» in Northern (i.e. French) Catalonia.

Mr Tresserras believes that an identity tourism needs to be set up based on authenticity, innovative and creative, with proposals focusing on material and immaterial heritage, artistic

production and cultural industries. «But it is also necessary to think about the limits and risks of tourist models based on identity and the strategic policies derived from it», he alerted. In his opinion, «synergies need to be created to prevent making culture for tourism; a balance needs to be found so tourists can take part in the country's cultural life in the most sustainable way possible and participate in a meeting space». The local population needs to be aware of these processes and have the opportunity of deciding and/or participating in the model, especially when identity is a resource to be fostered. Thus identity becomes a key factor in sharing the location spirit with visitors, Mr Tresserras concluded.

## «Gastronomy» by Pep Palau

Pep Palau reminded that the Catalan cuisine is one of the world's great cuisines and has a high prestige all over, mostly thanks to chefs like Ferran Adrià, but solid foundations need to be laid and future strategies worked out to reassert this leadership and convey Catalan identity.

During his speech, Mr Palau explained that the Catalan cuisine has an intangible heritage featuring all requirements a great cuisine needs, like traditional and elaborate recipes, craftsmanship rooted in tradition and social use of gastronomy. The Catalan cuisine also has a very valuable tangible heritage that is still growing, namely its producers, chefs and restaurants. To this wine and gastronomy consultant, farmers are paramount for continuity of a cuisine with deep roots as «without local produce we couldn't offer a high-quality territory nor could we boast a cuisine with identity». He therefore believes that «authenticity of produce and reliable quality certificates need to be required».

Mr Palau explained that Catalonia needs to be able to show its singularities to the world, as «typicality is now given a higher economic and commercial value than ever before». He asked to perceive local produce as a first-class

strategic resource. With this «we convey our cultural identity, give value to tourist resources and create a beneficial domino effect for other business activities».

In this respect, it becomes necessary to «build and communicate a manifold yet uniform picture of produce, cuisine and territory conferring value to all resources and identity items of local heritage». Mr Palau referred to values and reminded the cuisine groups, which provide the Catalan cuisine with a globally unique substrate and solidity, creating a link with the land, as well as the Gastronomic Forum, the biggest cuisine congress with attached fair in Europe that contributed to position the Catalan cuisine.

**Mr Palau asserted that it is necessary to «build and communicate a manifold yet uniform picture of produce, cuisine and territory conferring value to all resources and identity items of local heritage».**

Mr Palau warned of the risk of changing habits –eating and cooking less at home– that directly affect the continuity of traditional cuisine. He left the issue on the table as a thought and called upon parents and teachers to allow future generations to continue not only speaking Catalan but also «eating Catalan».

## «Tourism marketing with identity» by Josep Chias

Identity tourism marketing was the core subject of the speech by Josep Chias, who asserted that identity has always been one of the main distinctive traits of a destination and thus an aspect to consider when working on a marketing plan. He reminded his participation in the first marketing plan for Spain (1987) and the Barcelona Tourism Plan (1991) that led to the creation of Turisme de Barcelona, considered today a role model in global management.

Talking of tourism economy, he said that identity is a working component of marketing and a planning process that has to be thought in terms of country and not of government in the long term. What has to be avoided is that every new government invents a new message at country level, as is often the case, which is not recommendable at all to reach a consolidated position as a tourist destination as «consistency in the message is crucial».

Mr Chias pointed out that a country's marketing plan is not to explain its administrative geography but «the sum of a whole set of tourist destinations and products with their identity and singularity». Marketing positions territories, and since resources are limited and scarce, priorities need to be set. «We need identity, the past, the present and the future», he said.

According to Mr Chias, Catalans need to learn from the French and feel the warmth of belonging, «being different and wishing to be so». Communication is strategy and «it cannot change every year according to the publicity agency». Although the legislation obliges us to change suppliers every year, the message needs to be the same. He added that the strategy is expressed with the brand. For instance, the name of Catalonia always being written in Catalan in tourist promotion is an identity symbol as a country.

Mr Chias asserted that it is very important to have people create their own tourist brand of the country, of which there needs to be an argumentation to explain it. He pointed out that marketing serves to take a position and be different from the rest, from the competitors on grounds of nature, culture, gastronomy, historical heritage, stimuli and feelings. All this, he said, needs to be conveyed «to the mental space of the consumer and also to the shelf to be bought».

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The tourist brand of a country, he concluded, is in most cases the banner of an image lift. Finally, Mr Chias reminded of the economic value of tourism and that promotional investment is indispensable in order not to lose awareness vis-à-vis the competitors.

#### **ADRIANA DELGADO**

Degree in Journalism from the Autonomous University of Barcelona.

Communication adviser to the Catalan minister of Innovation, Universities and Enterprise.

She has worked at the *Regió7* newspaper and as a correspondent for *Com Ràdio*, *Avui* and *La Vanguardia*.

