

## Reflections about the technification and Dehumanization of Tourist Services

Esteban Arias Castañeda<sup>a</sup>

### Abstract

It is recognized the relationship of tourism and technology or rather, the adequacy of this processes of tourism services, which benefit the traveler experience. Technological advances beneficially impact the profitability of the company; mechanization may lead to remove the human from tourism, due to the dependence of devices and tools that keep the man himself. In the human desire to want to know and predict everything has fallen into an idea of anthropocentric sense, which is characterized by the premise of man's dominion over nature for the welfare and progress; resulting from it is the imminent loss of original meaning. It is necessary to reflect that the technique or technology is considered exclusively as a tool in order to return humanity to tourism, not replace it.

**Keywords:** Mechanization; Dehumanization; Tourism services; Tourism.

### Resumen

#### Reflexiones sobre la Tecnificación y Deshumanización de los Servicios Turísticos

Se reconoce la relación entre turismo y tecnología o más bien, la adecuación de esta a procesos de los servicios turísticos, los cuales mejoran la experiencia del viajero. Los adelantos tecnológicos impactan positivamente en la rentabilidad de la empresa; es posible que la tecnificación lleve a excluir lo humano de la actividad turística, debido a la dependencia de dispositivos y herramientas que alejan al hombre de sí mismo. En el afán humano de querer conocer y predecir todo, se ha caído en una idea de sentido antropocéntrica que se caracteriza por la premisa de dominio del hombre sobre la naturaleza en aras del bienestar y del progreso; lo que resulta en la inminente pérdida de sentido originario. Es menester reflexionar acerca de que la técnica o tecnología se considere exclusivamente como una herramienta, con el fin de devolver lo humano al turismo y no de reemplazarlo.

**Palabras clave:** Tecnificación; Deshumanización; Servicios turísticos; Turismo.

### Resumo

#### Reflexões sobre a Modernização e Desumanização dos Serviços Turísticos

É conhecida a relação entre o turismo e a tecnologia, ou melhor, a adequação desta aos processos de serviços de turismo, que beneficiam a experiência do viajante. Os avanços tecnológicos impactam beneficentemente a rentabilidade da empresa, mas é possível que a tecnificação possa contribuir para remover o humano da atividade turística, devido à dependência de dispositivos e ferramentas que separam homem de si mesmo. No desejo humano de querer saber e prever tudo, caiu-se em uma ideia de sentido antropocêntrico, que é caracterizada pela premissa do domínio do homem sobre a natureza para o bem-estar e do progresso; daí resulta a perda iminente de significado original. É necessário

a. PhD in Tourism Studies from Universidad Politécnica Estatal del Carchi (UPEC). E-mail: [esteban.arias.castaneda@gmail.com](mailto:esteban.arias.castaneda@gmail.com)

refletir que a técnica ou tecnologia deve ser exclusivamente uma ferramenta para devolver o humano ao turismo, e não para substituí-lo.

**Palavras-chave:** Modernização; Desumanização; Serviços de turismo; Turismo.

## **INTRODUCTION**

As it is well known and understood, there is an intimate relationship between tourism and technology, or rather, there is an adaptation of tourist processes and services to improve the traveler's experience and streamline the process or the execution of a task by the service provider. In that sense, the simplest part or use of technology, like smart reservation systems, for example, should be considered, although the tourist is not aware about the innovation, it is clear that this resource facilitates the experience.

Technology is attractive, it enraptures who experiences and seeks it or who goes deeper into an almost futuristic and ever closer world; the smart bracelet that is being used in the hotel business, specifically in Ibiza (Spain), which allows, among other things, to enter in the bedroom without the need to use cards or keys is an example of it.

The technological advances positively impact the profitability of the company that invests in it; however, it is possible that technification promotes the exclusion of the human participation in the tourist activity due to the dependence of devices and tools that take away the human being from oneself.

The coldness of technology will presumably lead to the replacement of people by machines capable of accomplishing human tasks, allowing the company to save time and money (salary). This partially dehumanizing process can make the tourist become a self-absorbed being unable to establish relationships.

## **TECHNOLOGY AND TOURISM**

Today it is not possible to live completely without the use of technology and with it the human being is creating dependence towards some artifacts that, in first instance, were used to simplify life but today are used in any kind of situation.

At this time, the electronic devices or gadgets and the applications available to them make, at the same time, the daily life fresh and practical to the extent that they facilitate some tasks and processes; even so, this represents only one side of the use of technology and the industry is another side, specifically in case of the tourist services. This has been seen from the imperative need to innovate or acquire the technology that makes the difference in relation to its competitors.

The differentiation has as main objective the profitability – any company subsists for it –, in this way partially ensures its existence in the future, but it is important to keep in mind that the game of differentiation will be won by the company that stimulates the preference and adapted to the needs of consumers.

Both the differentiation and the use of technology take action in the process of profitability, understood briefly as the return that a shareholder receives in

a company for participating economically in this. It is entirely understandable that companies have among their objectives the continuous generation of capital, and one way to get it is to create products that make the difference in relation to those with which they may have similarities within the market, and this is achieved through innovation or the acquisition of technology. What can be done by buying a software to improve hotel reservation system or something like a bracelet with a small device that contains the information of habits of purchase and consumption of the client or guest; or even design and commercialize an application that allows the tourist, from a mobile device, to have a virtual guide that provides a tour of a museum.

Of course, globalization is the first reason why companies, of any size, are compelled to compete and “to meet the needs of increasingly demanding consumers” (Énfasis Alimentación, 2013), therefore, valuing or considering investment in technology is not just an action of corporate strategy, is rather an indispensable means to optimize the resources of the companies and to be able to compete in the maelstrom of a market with focused and strict necessities.

Chirila (2007) talks about the relationship between technology and the tourist industry, arguing that it is attractive for the development of information technologies; since, due to its interterritorial character, it has to use strategies of promotion and commercialization of global scope and information technologies represent an audiovisual support, indispensable up to now.

Definitely, the way of traveling is constantly changing, the tourist seeks “more personalized tourism products and intelligent services that give them high quality and personalized information, anytime, anywhere and usually in real time” (Chirila, 2007, p. 6); and in order to get it, it is important to use everything that can be reflected in this experience; which may include the type of transport that the client wants or needs and also the time of lodging and information about feeding.

The Global Positioning System (GPS) revolutionized the automotive flow rate, since each device contains the information of thousands of cartographic maps and useful data for the driver like fuel stations, hotels, banks, among others; is certainly a safe bet to promote the tourism since this apparatus becomes increasingly portable and full of information, eliminating the big and heavy maps and guides of the city; GPS currently shows the exact location where the backpacker is located, almost millimetrically, as well as places of tourist interest and complementary establishments.

Without a doubt, GPS is a useful tool, however, it would be worth asking: How far it does the tourist away from the local inhabitants of the destination? That is to say, by creating a dependence on the device, the experience of human contact is avoided producing a kind of tourist isolation in which there is only the tourist, the device and the location to where the device guides.

The tourist experience has been enriched or modified over the years; remembering that with the emergence of the internet, the vision and ambition of the tourist was exponentially expanded, since with a click is possible to access destinations and tourist products from anywhere in the world. Now, with the use of the also known as information superhighway, and the potential tourists can consult the prices, besides the availability of the products and services of their

interest, all this without having to go to a travel agency, shortening the distance between the product and the consumer and eliminating the intermediary, which reduces the cost of travel and gives to the experience a different meaning (Dvojak, 2011).

Social networks play a transforming role in this context, first as an interaction tool allowing the tourist to share and exchange the experiences of the place visited; which, important to clarify, exposes both good and bad travel experiences and the bad ones are those that usually have more impact or receive more attention, because indicates a place where anyone can have a bad time. In second place, social network is a marketing tool – low-cost– with great reach and which offers the advantage of allowing some closeness with the customer, generating confidence and credibility. Thirdly, it acts as a reference tool, since the internet allows to know everything about the destiny or tourist product what is in mind, which allows the tourist to access information, to know virtually the destination and generate travel expectations.

## **TECHNIQUE OR TECHNIFICATION OF TOURISM**

As is well known, tourism has grown significantly because of technology, as well as air and water transport facilitated the displacement of people. It is currently considered that even space transport is developing and strengthening a significant trend for the tourism phenomenon, since it breaks the barriers or limits that avoided the common people from leaving the planet Earth, which today is already a reality, at least for a few very rich tourists.

Technology is, in brief terms, a means to an end; so much that it helps to satisfy necessities through the conjugation of knowledge and the manufacture of objects or tools that allow the modification of the environment for human benefit. Once this concept is apprehended, it is possible to resume the example of the smart bracelet used in hotels; in this electronic device is stored the information of the host, whose data serve, among other things, to enter in the bedroom without the need for a key or card and to make payments without cash or with a credit or debit card.

Before continuing, it is pertinent to address the theoretical foundation proposed by M. Heidegger, which will help to understand and reflect about the technology.

The German philosopher reflects about the Modern Age, and argues that it “is marked by a project of the Being whose understanding of what nature is has become an object of calculation, which is quantifiable and therefore controllable and manipulable” (Miranda, 2008, p. 129).

This position of instrumental nature has guided what is now known as technology and, according to Heidegger, this is a technical era, not for the existence of steam engines of that time, but for the way of thinking, which is technical (Miranda, 2008).

The technique what Heidegger talks about refers to the comfort or passivity that it provides to people. In this way, it explains that the activities or technical acts are “those which we strive to invent and then execute an activity plan that allows us to:

1° ensure the satisfaction of the needs, elementary for the moment

2° achieve this satisfaction with minimal effort

3° create a completely new possibility for us, producing objects that don't exist in the natural human life" (Heidegger, 2003, p. 105)

It means that with the technique the human effort to realize common tasks of the life is avoided, giving to people the opportunity to carry out other activities related to leisure. However, not only daily tasks are evaded, but stepwise all human activity becomes technical; the purpose of this would be precisely to cease the usual activities to leave the human being be human.

According to Heidegger, science does not breed or create modern technology, "but arises from a 'demand' to Nature to give to the people the accumulated energy" (Mora, 1965, p. 764). In clear terms, it refers to the use or exploitation of resources, by a way that the technique is a mean to an end; the most important thing in this point is to handle this mean properly, since otherwise "the more the technique threatens to escape man's control; to want to dominate it becomes more urgent" (Heidegger, 2003, p. 115).

It is possible that with the passage of time, the purpose of the technique has been distorted, according to this, Simondon (1989) argues that the technical object has been apprehended by human labor, which is thought and used as a mere instrument, that consequently is an aid or result of this same work, that is to say, the man creates the technique for his own benefit.

According to Miranda (2008) the technique is understood as calculation, planning, automation and technology reaches planetary dimensions; on purpose, according to Heidegger (2001, p. 43) this amplitude represents the "flight of the gods, the complete destruction of the earth, the massification of man, the hateful suspicion against all creator and freedom."

When even the last corner of the planet is conquered by the technique and economically exploited, when any event anywhere becomes accessible as quickly as possible, when it is possible to "to watch" simultaneously an attack against the king of France and a symphonic concert in Tokyo, when time means only speed, instantaneity and simultaneity, and the concept of time as history disappears from any existence of any people, when the boxer becomes the great figure of a people, when the millions of assembled masses signify triumph ... then, yes, still then, like a ghost projecting beyond all these chimeras, these questions will be extended: for what?, to where?, so what? (Heidegger, 2001, pp. 42-43).

This allows to continue the reflection, thinking that once the man has created all the intelligent devices, that the tourist processes are incredibly fast, What's next?, Where is going the technologically advanced humanity?, Where is going the tourism phenomenon?

Heidegger proposes proper and improper as ways of being human (among others), the first one refers to the factual life, that is to say the one that does not give account of itself, to the *ethos* or original state; and the second represents the fall, the representation, the definition of something. In this sense, the impropriety

leads to technology because it thematizes and is responsible for pre-occupying man, dominates the environment, dominates the resources that exist in nature, dominates the man.

The Modern Age is characterized, according to Heidegger, by the technique of machines and by instrumental science, that is, research; both became control devices of the system of organization, production and planning; therefore, the technique is not only in charge of controlling research and production, but also of man's behavior towards himself and his nature (Miranda, 2008).

For the man of the technical age "nature becomes a unique and gigantic 'service station,' a source of energy for modern technology and industry" (Heidegger, 2003, p. 93); for example, in front of a river, the technique does not observe a body of water that flows continuously, but also observes a potential hydroelectric power station or a product with tourist attraction that can generate incomes; as another example, in front of a natural zone, the technique observes a potential ecotourism park, and this is called tourism industry.

The tourism activity has been possible, to a large extent, due to natural resources which have become reserves or useful funding and, because of this availability, the technique is responsible for transforming them in such a way that they generate products for human use. However, nature is not the only resource available, man himself has become the raw material of himself, Heidegger (2003, p. 94) argues about it that "To be, today, is to be-replaceable. The very idea of 'reparation' has become an 'anti-economic' idea. It is essential to every consumer to be consumed and, in this way, calling for his replacement"; at this point man can be understood in the sense of being replaced by a machine that may require some repair, but would not be economically expensive as a training and without the skill or agility that could contribute to the tourist processes, for example the substitution of a hotel receptionist for software that enters the guest electronically.

Heidegger speaks about the disappearance of the traditional, that is, about the disappearance of man by man (of the human) in the quest to streamline and presumably improve the processes of hosting services, in appearance less human, but now faster, more luxurious and sophisticated.

The previous comment shows that man becomes a tool, in a server of the technique, as long as is in the custody of unpacking understood as the provocation or imposition towards nature to demand its energy and thus be exploited.

It is necessary to know how to identify and act with serenity before the technique, since

For us all the installations, apparatuses and machines of the technical world are irreplaceable today; for some more than for others. It would be foolish to march blindly against the technical world. It would be myopic to want to condemn the technical world as a work of the devil. We depend on the technical objects; these are even challenging us to a constant improvement. Without realizing it, we become so firmly molded by technical objects which bring us into a kind of servitude.

But we can also do something else. We can certainly use technical objects and, despite its convenient use, to keep ourselves free from the idea that they are always in detachment of ourselves. When using technical objects, we can use them as



they should be used. But at the same time we can leave those objects to reside in themselves as something that does not concern us in the most intimate experiences. We can give the yes to the unavoidable use of the technical objects and we can also say no in so far as we forbid them from making demands on us exclusivity, distort us, confuse us, and ultimately devastate us (Heidegger, 2003, pp. 100-101).

Now, man is the one who allows the intervention of the technique in daily life, which is done with the technique much more simple and calm, this means that he allows the entry of technical objects into his world and at the same time takes them out of his world, while there is still the option or free will around the technique; that for the tourist activity is not yet marked the dependence on technical devices; this choice is what Heidegger (2003, p. 101) enunciates as “the serenity in front of the things.”

## **DEHUMANIZATION**

So far, we have tried to visualize and understand the importance of the application or exercise of technology in tourist spaces or services, which, today, depend on these advances of a technical nature; however, these make the tourism glimpse the own future as a cold practice, that is, with reduced human contact.

The dehumanization, in common terms, refers to the fact that man is stripped or loses that which characterizes him as human; in this situation, technology possesses the quality of hindering human relations, in such a way that it isolates and alienates people.

It is possible that technology trends linked to tourism alienate the man of service processes with human contact; for example, the registration of a guest (check-in), for which the hosting company has a software that is responsible for the operations of registering, cashing and billing for services consumed, and can replace a person who does the same job, but without the complications of time. This kind of advances in tourist services will make it cold and inhuman; so that, each company must place on a scale if it prefers the precision and speed of an automated process in place of the warmth of human contact.

In the human desire to know, to examine and predict everything, was built an idea of anthropocentric meaning that is characterized by the premise of man's control and command over nature for the sake of well-being and progress; which results in the imminent loss of the original meaning and triggers the dehumanization. It is precisely the technique that, as part of man, turns against him and alienate him from his own essence to place him in an artificial apparatus that, by its logic, determines the environment of man and his world (Aguilar, 2010).

The technique is conceived as a way to reach the truth and leads the man to the unveiling or uncovering of the nature and puts it at his service as long as it is available for him.

the way of uncovering of the modern technique is [...]the provocation, the imposition, and this procedure, according to Heidegger, it does not involve any kind of danger, but “the danger” by excellence, because modern technology disobjects things and leads man towards dehumanization. The imposition of the modern technique

overrides other possible ways of unclogging and this indefinite self-expansion that carries out the technique implies the establishment of a technological rationality in all the areas (Aguilar, 2010, p. 16).

This imposition is that has forced the man to succumb in the age of technification, and to stand as a threat to the meaning of his existence, which is less and less original and, of course, more technical due to the rationality of the modern world.

According to Merelo (2013), both corporations and globalization or art are in charge of dehumanization, but argues that technique or technology is not responsible for removing the human of the human, but the man does it himself through the technique, that is to say, the technology does not dehumanize, since it is a tool that is used to deprive the man of his humanity, when faced with systems, automated programs that determine the actions of man, converting him into a process of the logical chain of the software.

## **CONCLUSIONS**

It is necessary to mention that humanism is committed to seek the supposed rescue of the human being from barbarism (Sloterdijk, 1999); it would be interesting to ask if the technification of the tourism is leading the man to a sort of alienation and lack of civility or urbanity; that is, the lack of compassion towards human life and experience.

The technological progress is undeniable and it would be a mistake to prevent the advances that contribute to tourism, which would be nothing without these advances. At present it is not possible to think of tourism without reservation systems, internet and transport that inevitably lead to the technology.

The new electronic devices, definitely, have been created to increase the tourist experience or to facilitate the internal processes of tourist services; it is at this point that must fall the reflection about the technological utility against the warmth and the human treatment.

As it was established the purpose of the technique is to provide comfort and satisfaction with minimal effort, and for tourism it would seem like an ideal speech or excuse when designing or acquiring technology.

Human life has been technified until the point of creating dependence on devices that moves away man from man.

In this essay a latent reality has been put on the table, in which the human future of the tourist activity hangs by a thread, as long as there is serenity with things and that technique or technology is considered exclusively as a tool, in order to return the humanity to tourism and not replace it.

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Received on: 11/08/2016

Approved on: 17/07/2017