Review

Contemporary Challenges in Destination Planning: A Geographical Typology Approach

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Abstract: This paper aims to outline a framework for reviewing the issues faced by tourism destination planning in the 21st century. This paper documents the use of tourism destination typologies as a framework for policy analysis and as a basis for decision making. The main research hypothesis of this study is that typologies based on, or primarily focused on, geographical dimensions have historically been the appropriate framework for strategic planning. This study proposes the use of a basic geographical typology, according to which destinations are categorized into urban, island, coastal, and mountainous. This paper refers to the evolution, key features, and challenges faced by each type of destination. Through a review of international best practices, this study maps out the fundamental objectives, developmental patterns, and strategies for each geographical type of destination, offering valuable insights for future research. Emphasis is given to contemporary trends in tourism planning in the first few decades of the 21st century.

Keywords: destination planning; geographical typologies; destination typologies; contemporary tourism planning

1. Introduction

Tourist destination planning has evolved from mainly focusing on infrastructure, business growth, and marketing in the 20th century to integrating a remarkably broad set of concerns, including environmental sustainability, innovation, culture, and social issues in the 21st century. This evolution complicates attempts to critically review and analyze current strategies. Typology is a useful analytical tool for tourist destination planning, allowing managers and planners to make appropriate decisions [1]. The classification of tourist destinations into typologies is an essential process for strategic tourism planning, especially at national and regional levels, as it allows for specialized policy decisions based on destination type.

The aim of this study is to create a framework for reviewing the central trends in tourist destination planning in the 21st century. The core research hypothesis posits that typologies focused primarily on geographical dimensions provide a framework for analyzing applied strategic planning. To support this hypothesis, this study proposes using a basic geographical typology, classifying destinations into urban, island, coastal, and mountainous. Through the review and analysis of international best practice cases, this work aims to highlight key trends in 21st-century tourism destination planning. The mapping of key objectives and strategies by geographical destination type will further help to identify convergences and divergences in planning, depending on the geographical and other characteristics of the destinations.

2. Typologies of Tourist Destinations

Although the term "tourist destination" is one of the most frequently used in tourism research, scholars agree that there is no universally accepted definition or broadly accepted approach to its analysis [2–6]. Throughout the evolution of research, the destination has become the subject of analysis across multiple scientific fields in tourism (geography, spatial

planning, sociology, economics, management, and marketing). The complex nature of tourist destinations presents a challenge for its management, requiring effective adaptation to the specific characteristics of each case. Classifying tourist destinations into types serves as a useful planning tool, grounded in the understanding, analysis, and evaluation of the destination's system structure and its geographical, developmental, and social features. Many well-established typologies have been developed to address the different approaches.

For the purpose of this research, we examine the tourist destination through a multi-disciplinary, triple approach. Initially, as a geographical entity transformed by the impacts of tourism activity and a spatial, economic, social, and cultural matrix, the characteristics of which determine to some extent the type and intensity of tourism development. Subsequently, as a comprehensive product and an amalgam of products and components that attract and serve the tourist. Finally, as an open, dynamic, adaptive system evolving under the influence of exogenous and endogenous parameters, going through distinct stages of tourism development. In related literature, numerous methods have been documented that rely on a combination of criteria that cover each of the above three approaches. The approach based on the destination as a place/geographical entity, distinguishes types of destinations according to their geographical characteristics, climate, and the natural, cultural, and territorial resources of each area [7–12]. The approach that examines destinations as the final tourism product categorizes them to criteria such as the model of tourism development, tourism specialisation, length of stay, quality of supply [1,13,14]. Classification according to tourists' perceptions is based on the image they have of the destination and influences their choice [15–17]. The open evolving system approaches refer to stages in the evolution of the destination, (such as the life cycle and the level of tourism development) [18–22] or to a multitude of issues related to the management of the destination (types of governance, strategic objectives, management systems, certifications, etc.) [23–29] The above investigation, which is indicative in nature, is briefly presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Typologies of tourist destinations.

Destination Examination Approach	Main Criteria and Indicators	Indicative Typologies	Sources
As a place/geographical entity	Geographical indicators often combined with demographic indicators. Climatic indicators. Significance and Sensitivity of Local Resources. Ownership status..	Urban, Mountainous, Coastal, Insular etc. 4-season destinations, Warm climate, Cold climate etc. Destinations of endogenous or exogenous tourist development etc.	[7–12]
As a product	Operation Duration of stay and position in the trip. Trip organization. Perception and reasons for choice. Offered tourist experience.	Multi-product destinations or Specialised destinations (such as ski resorts, spa towns), etc. Weekend destinations, Intermediate stops, etc. Package, independent or mixed tourism destinations, etc. Degree of familiarity or uncertainty (Attractive and accessible destinations, Attractive and inaccessible, Unattractive. Unknown, etc.) Uniqueness of experience ("Authentic" destinations, "Unique—exotic—exclusive", etc.)	[1,13,14]

Table 1. *Cont.*

Destination Examination Approach	Main Criteria and Indicators	Indicative Typologies	Sources
As an open, adaptive, evolving system	Stage of Touristic Development. Level of Touristic Development Evolution trends Issues related to the management of the destination	Destinations at various stages of tourist development (at initial stages, mature, declining, at stage of recovery/regeneration etc.) Destinations that have exceeded their carrying capacity Types of governance Strategic objectives Management systems Certifications	[18–29]

Source: Processed by the author.

The classification of tourist destinations into types is based on the understanding, analysis, and evaluation of the destination's system structure as well as its spatial, developmental, and social characteristics. It is carried out using specific criteria. As the patterns of the development and management of tourist destinations evolve [30,31], classifications of destinations also evolve into more complex typologies. In the context of sustainable tourism development, it is necessary to consider all the dimensions of the tourist destination and to apply a multi-criteria system of analysis which takes into account the environmental, cultural, and social characteristics of the geographical area as well as the characteristics of the demand, supply, and organisation of tourist activity [6,32]. In practice, a single typology is rarely used. Depending on the objective of the planning or research and the available data, each researcher chooses complex typologies that combine criteria and indicators.

3. Methodology

The object of the current research is to review the key issues faced by tourist destination planning in the 21st century, using geographical typologies as a framework for analysis. The study's primary research hypothesis suggests that typologies centred mainly on geographical criteria can serve as the foundation for creating a framework for strategic planning that it is useful for tourist destination managers.

Geographical criteria are used in most established methodologies for classifying tourism destinations, as they can directly link to specific characteristics and local resources and to specific characteristics and standards of tourism development and categories of tourism products. Additionally, distinguishing specific geographical units is practical, as it is generally easy to determine commonly accepted boundaries. For these reasons, strategic tourism planning often employs geographical typologies in conjunction with other criteria. To substantiate the research hypothesis, this study proposes the use of basic geographical typology, in which destinations are categorized as urban, island, coastal, and mountainous. A useful methodological framework is provided by Eurostat's territorial categorization, which defines specific criteria for each geographical type [33] (Table 2).

This article focuses on the geographical destination types that attract the highest levels of tourism. Consequently, as evidenced by current research, these destinations have been subjected to the greatest number of strategic planning efforts, providing ample material for analysis. According to a recent study by Batista e Silva et al. [8], coastal and island destinations make up the largest share of overnight stays in the EU (42%), followed by a significant margin by urban destinations (19%), and then mountainous destinations (16%). Coastal regions also have the highest tourist intensity, with 12.3 overnight stays per resident, significantly higher than mountainous and urban regions, which have 7.3 and 5.3 overnight stays per resident, respectively. Regarding the proportion of foreign tourists, coastal areas have the highest average rate, approximately 45%. On the other hand, cities, mountainous, and rural destinations are characterized, on average, by much higher percentages of domestic tourists. Finally, coastal destinations show the highest seasonality, whereas urban

areas the lowest. Given the findings from Batista e Silva et al., this research focuses on the four geographical types: urban, coastal, island, and mountain destinations. The category of rural destinations was included with that of mountainous destinations and was not evaluated individually.

Table 2. Spatial delineation of key geographical areas -Eurostat (2018).

Destination Examination Approach	Main Criteria and Indicators
Coastal destinations	Destinations located within 10 km from the coastline
Island destinations	- minimum surface area of 1 km^2 - minimum distance between the island and the mainland 1 km - permanent population of over 50 inhabitants
Urban destinations	A city is a local administrative unit where the majority of the population lives in an urban centre of at least 50,000 inhabitants. Complex indices have been developed that refer to population, density, and degree of urbanization
Mountainous destinations	Regions at an altitude above 1000 m
Rural destinations	Areas that do not belong to the other categories

Source: [33].

Each destination category was examined separately. Initially, each type of destination was analysed based on its three dimensions, that is, as a geographical entity, as a product, and as an open evolving system. For this purpose, a brief reference was made to the development of tourist growth in each geographical type of destination, highlighting the basic characteristics of tourist activity and the challenges it faces. Then, a review of destination management plans was carried out. The findings were coded into matrices according to the main goals of the planning and key strategies. Emphasis was given to contemporary trends in tourist planning in the first decades of the 21st century.

Sources for the research included sustainable development programs and integrated strategies that have been implemented in tourist destinations of all geographical types all around the world, but emphasis has been placed on European ones. The criterion for selection was their international or European recognition as 'best practices' in planning. To achieve this, best practices guidelines were indexed from studies, management frameworks, and accolades (such as awards and certifications) from international entities and intergovernmental organizations like the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO), the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), as well as from initiatives by supranational unions like the European Union. From the process of mapping the applied strategies, very useful conclusions arose for the management and planning of tourist destinations, both at a strategic level and at an implementation level.

4. Analysis of Results by Destination Category

4.1. Urban Destinations

Urban destinations offer a wide and heterogeneous range of cultural, architectural, technological, social experiences, and products for leisure and business tourism [34]. Cities differ in terms of population, size, functions, type, and geographical location, and accordingly, the contribution of tourism to the urban economy and its impact on the urban landscape also varies [35]. Cities also play a significant role in the overall tourism system as they serve as gateways for international and domestic tourists, as well as hubs in air and rail transport systems, and therefore act as intermediate stops in multi-destination trips.

4.1.1. Review of the Evolution of Urban Tourist Destinations

Although cities have been the oldest travel destinations, the discussion around the development of urban tourism began to be systematized after 1990. Based on the historical

evolution of urban tourism, Law [36] and Judd & Fainstein [37] identify three types of urban destinations:

(I) Historical cultural metropolises have been the oldest travel destinations. Since the late 17th century, the 'Grand Tour' in the classic historical cities of Europe, such as Rome and Athens, offered young aristocrats an opportunity to acquaint themselves with the cultural heritage of classical works and monuments from antiquity and the Renaissance, as well as to broaden their personal and professional networks. In the 19th century, the development of the railway facilitated tourist travel. Cities with world cultural landmarks were included in the first tourist packages, such as those designed by Thomas Cook. Capitals and major cities began to organize themselves to attract tourists. They hosted international events, created new public monuments, and new museums.

(II) Resort towns, designed for tourism, culture, and leisure from the 18th and 19th centuries. Resort towns specialize in a primary product (spa towns, coastal resorts, alpine resorts, etc.), which differentiates their morphology from that of other urban areas. They were often designed as places for culture, leisure, and social interaction, initially for the upper classes. This sort of city arose in the setting of 19th-century urban architecture and was equipped with magnificent hotels, theatres, public parks, and recreational facilities such as casinos, among other things.

(III) Former industrial cities and cities with other specializations have shifted towards new roles through the development of urban tourism since the late 1980s. Many declining industrial cities and port cities, which had been severely affected by industrial recession and economic crisis, successfully leveraged the tourism industry to rejuvenate themselves, improve their image both domestically and internationally, and attract new economic activities. In Europe, characteristic examples of former industrial cities that have applied rejuvenation strategies through culture, tourism, and education are Manchester, Glasgow, Liverpool, and Bilbao. In the early 21st century, emerging cities in Eastern Europe and Asia are seeing the value of tourism for growth. These cities are using planning strategies to become appealing tourist destinations, increasing global competition in the process.

Only from 2007 to 2017, city tourism quadrupled in size globally, while in 2017, 170 million trips were made, accounting for nearly 30% of global tourism [38]. The rapid development of city tourism in the 21st century can be explained by at least three driving factors. The global increase in mobility through the offer of affordable transport options, the increasing urbanization of the population with cities now hosting more than 50% of the global population [39], and the ability of urban destinations to offer a very wide range of contemporary, diversified tourist products.

4.1.2. Contemporary Issues and Challenges in Urban Destination Planning

In the early decades of the 21st century, planning and management strategies in urban destinations form two main approaches.

The first approach (Table 3) has its roots in the urban regeneration programs of declining industrial cities of the 1990s and relates to the transformation of cities or urban sections through cultural tourism, urban heritage, and recreation [36,37,40–44]. This is emergency and specialized planning, closely linked to economic and cultural globalization, aiming to use tourism as a lever for transforming the city's form and economy in order to reposition it in the international market with a new or renewed image [45]. Urban regeneration plans have been implemented with strategies that include the organization of large national and international events (with emblematic examples of good practices being the Cultural Capital of Europe 1990 in Glasgow and the organization of the Olympic Games in 1992 in Barcelona), the funding of iconic urban and architectural projects (mega-/flagship projects) (such as the Guggenheim Museum in Bilbao, 1997), the promotion of urban heritage, and the creation of new large-scale cultural and tourist resources. Culture has emerged as a critical component in cultural revitalization efforts and has boosted the

development of a plethora of new cultural attractions and events. Real estate investment connected to tourism and leisure are part of this discussion (Zukin 2010).

Table 3. Contemporary issues and challenges in urban destination planning: urban regeneration through tourism, culture, and leisure activities.

Strategic Goal	Indicative Strategies
Urban regeneration centred around culture, tourism, and recreation	Hosting national and international mega-events Funding of urban and architectural mega-projects Highlighting of urban heritage Developing innovative cultural spaces Development of cultural tourism Competitive marketing and branding

Source: [36,37,40–44] processed by the author.

Urban regeneration strategies have received conflicting views. It is recognized that they contribute positively to the improvement of the quality of the urban environment, tourist attractiveness, and the development of investment and employment, but they have also been criticized for potentially creating social tensions and conflicts, as evidenced by the rise of movements against tourism as a reaction to cultural commodification and tourist 'gentrification [46,47]. The term 'McGuggenheim' questions the effectiveness of cities investing in expensive cultural 'flagship projects' to attract global attention [48,49]. The cancelled $138 million Helsinki Guggenheim Museum, notably its $20 million brand cost, sparked local debate and was termed a 'reaction against globalization' by the Solomon Foundation's director [50,51]

The response to the aforementioned concerns is the effort to integrate tourism into urban policies for sustainable tourism development. According to the second approach (Table 4), tourism is not the main focus of the urban economy, but must be integrated into the overall planning for sustainable urban development and contribute to addressing key contemporary urban issues. Urban tourism can contribute to the progress of the United Nations' New Urban Agenda and the 17 Sustainable Development Goals, specifically Goal 11: 'Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient, and sustainable.' At the EU level, these issues have been articulated through policy documents related to Green Cities, Resilient Cities, Innovative Cities, and Creative Cities [47].

The integration of tourism into all aspects of urban planning requires cross-sectoral, integrated strategies, which are addressed through participatory governance. In Berlin since 2004, there has been the 'Tourism Round Table' (German: Runder Tisch Tourismus), a high-level forum for dialogue and coordination between private and public stakeholders for city tourism [52]. In 2017, Wonderful Copenhagen presented its 2020 'Localhood' strategy, a vision that sees tourism not as an end in itself but as a means of a sustainable purpose, that it positively contributes to society [53]. The need for the measurement and analysis of urban tourism and its impacts, and for evidence-based decision-making among public and private entities, has been clearly defined under the impetus of the UNWTO. In 2012, the UNWTO launched the Cities Project and established a set of priorities, which were ratified by the Istanbul Declaration. The Cities Impact Measurement Project promoted by the UNWTO is a global forum for dialogue on tourism policy and a source of the analysis of practices and tourism expertise [38,54].

Resilient cities have the ability to absorb, recover, and prepare for future shocks (economic, environmental, social, and institutional). As tourism is a particularly vulnerable sector, tourism planning should be integrated into broader planning for crisis management (health crises, terrorism, etc.) and for addressing climate change.

In planning for Green Cities, a key strategy is sustainable urban mobility. This is an important issue given that urban traffic generates 40% of CO_2 emissions [55]. Tourists are a key user group for transportation, with needs, standards, and preferences that represent pressure factors for improving urban mobility systems. Chester in the UK has followed a long-term integrated planning strategy for accessibility that includes extensive urban

interventions. In 2017, it won the European Access City Award and in 2018, Chester joined the World Health Organization's Global Network for Age-Friendly Cities and Communities [56]. The CIVITAS DESTINATIONS initiative incorporates sustainable tourism and mobility and accessibility strategies in island urban destinations such as Limassol in Cyprus, Rethymno in Crete, and Valletta in Malta [57]. 'Green marketing' is promoted by the European Commission through its 'European Green Capital' (EGC) award [58]. Ljubljana won the EGC 2016 award after 10 years of systematic planning. The award had a significant impact on the city's tourist appeal, bolstered its brand and reputation, and ranked it among the TOP 100 Sustainable World Destinations.

In strategies for innovative cities, there should be foresight, among other things, for innovative initiatives in visitor management and enhancing the tourist experience. The European Capital of Smart Tourism is a relatively new European initiative that, since 2019, recognizes outstanding achievements from European cities as innovative tourist destinations [59,60].

Creativity is recognized as a strategic factor for sustainable urban development. The UNESCO Creative Cities Network (UCCN) was established in 2004 and consists of nearly 300 cities that collaborate with the aim of putting creativity and cultural industries at the centre of their development plans [61]. Creative policies have been developed in many European cities (such as Berlin, Barcelona, Bordeaux, Helsinki, Turin, etc.), in America, and in Asia. In Thailand, 10 cities have now been designated as creative cities under the 'Creative Thailand' policy.

Table 4. Contemporary issues and challenges in urban destination planning: integration of tourism into planning for sustainable urban development.

Strategic Goals	Indicative Strategies	Indicative Actions
Participatory Governance	Cooperation of public and private sector Participatory planning Monitoring—evaluation	Existence of a Destination Management Organization Intersectoral cooperation and coordination Processes of participation of the inhabitants Structures for monitoring the impacts and performances of tourism in the city
Resilience City	Strategies for managing the impacts of climate change Crisis management Regulation of land uses through urban planning	Integration of tourist planning in all aspects of strategies for a resilient city Regulation of tourist development and overtourism Management of tourist flows and tourist behaviour Dispersion of visitors in the city Management of the Sharing Economy
Green city	Environmental quality Reduction of urban footprint Recycling Increase in green spaces Sustainable mobility/equity in accessibility Reduction of traffic congestion	Corporate social responsibility and strengthening green practices in tourist businesses related to recycling, air quality, energy efficiency Accessibility to places frequented by tourists Promotion of urban bicycle tourism Development of Innovative Urban Tourist Routes
Innovative City	Smart use of information, communications, infrastructure, and services.	Innovative initiatives, often involving the use of technology, to improve the quality of life of citizens and enhance the quality of experience for visitors
Creative City	Participation in cultural life without exclusions Enhancement of cultural production and networking	Integration of tourist planning in all aspects of strategies for a creative city Personalized Approach to the Tourist Experience

Sourceç: [38,54–56,62–70] processed by the author.

4.2. Coastal Destinations

Coastal destinations offer a unique combination of resources located at the boundaries of terrestrial and maritime environments: sun, beaches, stunning landscapes, rich biodiversity, and solid infrastructure. The development of coastal tourism is linked to the so-called sun-and-sea tourism, as a primary tourist motivator.

4.2.1. Review of the Evolution of Coastal Destinations

The concept of the coastal destination first emerged in the mid-18th century, when sea-bathing became popular as a means of maintaining health. In Europe, the first generation of coastal destinations was created in the industrial North and was largely a product of the railway era. In Southern England, coastal areas like Brighton, Bournemouth, and Torquay initially developed as vacation spots for the aristocracy and were equipped with stunning hotels, theatres, public recreation gardens, etc., all within the framework of Victorian urban architecture. The tourism development of these areas persisted from the 1930s through the 1960s, paralleling improvements in road access and the expansion of the institution of annual paid leave, which gradually transformed vacations into a social good accessible to the masses [71].

The decline in first-generation coastal destinations began to become apparent in the 1960s when the market shifted to then-developing second-generation coastal destinations, a representative example of which are the Mediterranean coastal destinations [72]. The second generation of mass tourists travelled by air, with economical charter flights. Sunshine, safety, the affordable cost provided by the organization of the trip, and the use of charters, were the main reasons for the explosive development of tourism in the Mediterranean basin [73]. In the mid-1970s, major tourism agencies made significant investments in Mediterranean basin destinations, Malta–Spain–Cyprus–Greece–Turkey–Yugoslavia, benefiting from the sunshine and sandy shores. In Mediterranean countries, where the cost of living remained substantially below the European average until the 1980s, very affordable packages were offered. These coastal resorts were characterized by the speed of development, unchecked speculation, and dependence on charters and tour-operators [74], and they created a tourist product that was largely homogeneous [75].

Coastal mass tourism destinations continued to increase their demand in the decades of the '70s and '80s and, passing through some fluctuations, and reached their upper limit at some point in the 1990s when the signs of saturation in the environment of these destinations were already evident: weaknesses in tourist infrastructure & indifference towards ecological sustainability [76,77]. Meanwhile, competition in the sun-oriented tourism market grew as from the late 1980s, the search for new markets by tour-operators brought new coastal destinations to the forefront that developed directly from the second or even the third stage [78]. These areas are described as 'resorts of the moment', as happened in Cancun in Mexico and Eilat in Israel. These third-generation mass coastal destinations were introduced in the late 1990s development stage. They mainly have emerged in the developing world and are characterized by a higher degree of planning, control, and quality: multi-star hotels, marinas, and golf courses combined with exotic locations, aimed at a mass tourist who wants to be considered a more selective consumer [75].

4.2.2. Contemporary Issues and Challenges in Coastal Destination Planning

Since the 2000s, first and second-generation coastal tourist destinations have entered a post-stagnation phase, while from the first decade of the 21st century they are in a second cycle of development. This progression has resulted in a major portion of academic study focusing on how mature destinations have addressed the challenge of tourist stagnation and the planning they have used to achieve visitor recovery.

In Europe, particular attention is paid to the rejuvenation strategies implemented in cooperation with the central administration and local government by first-generation British coastal destinations. Their goal is to differentiate their product or reposition themselves in new markets for culture, tourism, recreation, and education (Table 5) [72,79].

Among the second-generation coastal Mediterranean destinations, Spain stands out for its comprehensive upgrading of its mature destinations (upgrading the environment, services, and infrastructure) and enriching its "sun and sea" product to attract a more demanding and competitive sun-seeking tourist market [80]. In the good practices of Australian coastal destinations, emphasis has been placed on diversifying the existing model while developing new products or gradually exploiting untapped resources, through which repositioning achieves better spatial and temporal dispersion of tourism flows [81]. In several cases, planning is incorporated within the framework of internationally applied tools and procedures, such as the implementation of Local Agenda 21 and the Integrated Quality Management (IQM) process [22].

In the second decade of the 21st century, coastal areas are high on the agenda of supranational policy bodies for sustainable development and managing the impacts of climate change. Threats include sea-level rise (SLR) and increased extreme weather events which are very likely to lead to massive socio-economic and environmental losses in coastal areas in the coming decades. Planning is called upon to manage the adaptation and management of tourist activity, the mapping of vulnerability, and the increase in the resilience of coastal destinations, as well as scenario planning for informing potential future adaptive management responses within the framework of tourism governance [82–85]. The international scientific community is moving toward integrated coastal zone management (ICZM), making efforts to establish the conditions and procedures for its implementation.

Table 5. Contemporary issues and challenges in coastal destination planning: regeneration strategies of mature coastal destinations.

Weaknesses	Indicative Strategies
Absence of comprehensive planning	Integration into internationally recognized tools and processes such as Local Agenda 21 and the Integrated Quality Management (IQM) process
Saturation of the natural and built environment	Regulation of tourism development Landscape restoration from the impacts of unplanned development. Enhancement of the built environment (beautification) Protection of natural resources
Outdated infrastructure	Infrastructure upgrade
Lack of skills at local level High dependence on Tour Operators	Investment in human resources Service enhancement.
One-dimensional outdated sun and sea product (3S) Intense seasonality	Enrichment of the tourist product and diversification through the development of new products
Reduced competitiveness Poor or bad tourist image	Marketing of the renewed tourism image

Sources: [22,75,80,81,86–91] processed by the author.

4.3. Island Destinations

Tourism on islands (and especially on sun-and-sea tourism islands) has grown at a rapid pace since the 1960s, when improvements in maritime transportation and the development of air travel and charter flights gradually made access easier and more affordable. Island destinations attract interest at political, academic, and professional levels, as evidenced by the extensive literature developed since the 1990s [92–98] and numerous institutional initiatives by international and intergovernmental bodies.

4.3.1. Review of the Evolution of Island Destinations

Island destinations have many common characteristics with coastal destinations in the development of their tourist product, as most of them have evolved based on the model of

sun-and-sea tourism. No specific mention is made of their development as it is covered in Section 4.2.1.

4.3.2. Contemporary Issues and Challenges in Island Destination Planning

The need to support islands with specialized policies was first recognized by the international community in 1992 and adopted in 1994 to specify the directions of Agenda 21 in policies, actions, and measures applicable at international, national, and regional levels. In the Treaty of Amsterdam (1997), the EU recognized insularity as a geopolitical factor and a permanent disadvantage due to additional limitations on competitiveness, highlighting that community legislation should take this parameter into account in the policies it applies.

Island destinations, although sharing many features with coastal destinations, require a specialized planning approach. Insularity is described as a characteristic associated with geographical, cultural, and socioeconomic elements but also resulting from specific policy decisions. Insularity is a persistent phenomenon of geographical discontinuity and intensifies inversely with the size of the island and proportionately to its distance from the mainland or other islands [99]. As a concept, it is also linked to the factors of the vulnerability and the uniqueness of the natural and anthropogenic environment (Table 6).

Table 6. Classification of islands based on factors affecting insularity intensity.

Factors	Classification of Islands
Population	• Very large islands with a population of over 500,000 residents • Large islands with a population of 50,000 to 500,000 residents • Medium-sized islands with a population of 5000 to 50,000 residents • Small islands with a population of 750 to 5000 residents • Very small islands with a population of less than 750 residents, which do not have more than minimal services and are completely dependent on neighbouring islands or the nearest mainland region
Size	• Very large islands with an area exceeding 1000 square kilometres • Large islands with an area ranging from 500 to 1000 square kilometres • Medium-sized islands with an area ranging from 100 to 500 square kilometres: 20 islands, • Small islands with an area ranging from 100 to 50 square kilometres: 16 islands, • Very small islands with an area below 50 square kilometres
Climate/Temperature	• Island destinations with warm waters • Island destinations with cold waters
Accessibility	• Islands connected by air • Islands directly connected to the mainland by ferry • Islands connected through another island
Administrative Status	• Island nations • Island regions of countries • Isolated islands in continental regions

Source: Adapted from [99–102].

Such is the diversity of islands that the current literature recognizes the need for studies on islands, presenting each 'on its own terms' [103,104]. However, insularity and its ensuing characteristics create a framework of threats and opportunities that pose common challenges in tourist planning in island destinations [9], (Table 7).

Due to their small size, islands face resource inadequacy, land use competition, and often urbanization, issues that make close collaboration between spatial and tourist planning

imperative, which is a challenge for most island destinations [105]. The Greek island of Santorini and the Spanish island of Mallorca serve as quintessential examples of urbanized islands that have leveraged spatial planning to address excessive construction for touristic and vacation-related uses [106,107].

Most islands face increased transportation costs, limited access to healthcare and education infrastructure, and energy dependence on fossil fuels. Tackling demographic shrinkage and labour force deficiencies should be a priority in tourism planning. Local authorities in Scotland's Hebrides are implementing social housing programs and apprenticeships in alternative forms of tourism to retain young residents. Several island destinations, such as Barbados, Antigua and Barbuda, Aruba, and the Cayman Islands, are trying to capitalize on the rise of remote work following the COVID-19 pandemic, aiming to attract digital nomads [108].

Tourism has perennially been a fundamental driver of economic growth, job creation, and professional mobility, particularly for youth and women [109]. However, without proper planning, many small islands that lack other resources are led to tourism monoculture. For this reason, strategies for diversifying island economies—combined with quality tourism services within the framework of the 'blue economy'—are deemed essential. The island of Gozo in Malta, in its strategic planning for 2021–2030, encourages collaborations with research institutions and private sector entities for the development of agritechnology, medical rehabilitation, and the creative economy [110].

Social justice, the reduction of dependency on foreign capital, and the leakage of tourism earnings abroad are particularly challenging for Small Island Developing States (SIDS) which must incorporate policies for the development of local tourism entrepreneurship and local participation in tourism governance in their strategic planning [111].

The vulnerability of island regions is a characteristic stemming from their small scale and isolation. Popular islands and island complexes of mass tourism such as the Balearic Islands, the Canary Islands, Mykonos and Santorini in the Cyclades, and many islands of Thailand, have exhibited the phenomenon of overtourism, leading to serious sustainability issues, such as increased waste, water pollution, and ecosystem degradation. Due to their geographical location and isolation, many island destinations possess unique but threatened biodiversity, a fact that necessitates the implementation of integrated systems of sustainable management. Calvia in Majorca, Spain, is an example of a mass island municipality that has implemented integrated planning within the framework of Agenda 21 since the late 1990s [22]. Managing tourist flow and dynamic capacity assessment are crucial for fragile island ecosystems. Setting maximum bed limits has already been a tool implemented since the mid-1980s in many mature Mediterranean island destinations [13] and extended after 2000 to newer tropical destinations such as the Seychelles [112]. In 2020, Majorca incorporated the goal of reducing bed numbers by 22% to combat overtourism into its strategic planning [106]. Currently, a series of global crises, such as economic recession, the COVID-19 pandemic, and global warming, have threatened the economic viability of island destinations, particularly those heavily dependent on long-haul air travel and cruise tourism. It is important for planning to incorporate the strategic goal of resilience, especially in island destinations [113–117].

The parameters of island-ness are also tied to significant elements of tourist attraction. Since the era of Defoe writing 'Robinson Crusoe' in 1719, islands have captivated the imagination in popular culture. They occupy a special place in the traveller's psyche, often representing a lost 'paradise' [118]. Small scale, unique ecosystems, strong social capital, and a sense of identity are potent elements of allure. Tourist planning must analyse the unique 'experiential identity' of the islands and the different ways residents and visitors perceive the symbolic features of an island [99]. Islands such as Ibiza (Spain), Bali (Indonesia), Mykonos (Greece), Hainan (China), and Bornholm (Denmark) have developed such strong brand names that they distinguish them from the country they belong to.

Islands are often treated as 'laboratories' for tourism planning [96]. As they constitute bounded systems, they facilitate scientific observation. Studies on the impacts of

tourism and the life cycle in island destinations in the Pacific, the Caribbean, and the Mediterranean have yielded significant findings for the better management of tourism development [102,119–123]. Islands can serve as living laboratories for knowledge production in various sectors directly or indirectly linked to sustainable tourism development. Currently, many island destinations are implementing actions for the development of innovation in green energy (Uniđe–Croatia, Samsø–Denmark, Heligoland–Germany, Tilos Greece), sustainable mobility (Lastovo–Croatia), circular economy (Eigg–Scotland), innovation festivals (Vlieland–Denmark), multi-level governance, technology, and creative and cultural industries (Hebrides–Scotland) [102].

Table 7. Contemporary issues and challenges in island destination planning: managing insularity.

Insularity Factors	Issues/Challenges	Indicative Strategies
Small Size	Limited land resources, competition for land use limited resources (energy, water, etc).	Spatial planning Regulation of competitive uses Establishment of terrestrial and marine protected areas Promotion of the use of renewable energy sources and waste management systems by the private tourism sector
Addressing Human Resource Shortages	Leadership Deficiency, and Limited Local Expertise Dependency on foreign capital Leakage of economic benefits outside the local communityLimited access to healthcare and education facilities	Investment in human resources Promoting community involvement in tourism governance Boosting Local Entrepreneurship Developing policies for community well-being through tourism Investing in Infrastructure and Embracing New Technologies
Regionalism and isolation	High costs of establishment and operation for businesses and households Demographic decline Laboratories for innovations	Improvement of transportation and networking infrastructure New employment opportunities. Affordable housing supply Attracting digital nomads Development of tourism activity monitoring systems Development of tourism innovation policy
Vulnerability	Vulnerability of the natural environment Impacts of climate change, Vulnerability of the human environment, Heavy dependence on tourism/tourism monoculture. Seasonality	Integrated planning for sustainable development with an emphasis on resilience Crisis management strategies Diversification of island economies Promotion of an integrated system of cooperating productive sectors. Enrichment and diversification of the tourism product
Uniqueness/aesthetic quality	Unique natural and cultural environment Distinct identity	Promotion of unique local resources Creating a distinct local identity through the collaboration of all stakeholders

Source: [9,95,99,101,102,114,115,124–127] processed by the author.

4.4. Mountain Destinations

Mountains cover approximately 27% of the Earth's surface and extend across every continent and every type of ecosystem. Tourist demand in mountain destinations accounts for about 16–20% of global tourist flows according to a 2018 study [8].

4.4.1. Review of the Evolution of Mountain Destinations

Mountains have been tourist destinations since the 18th century when their idyllic landscapes attracted philosophers, poets, and painters like Jean-Jacques Rousseau, who

significantly contributed to generating tourist demand from the economic elite for first-generation mountain destinations. Thanks to pioneering entrepreneurs, the first mountain destinations were equipped with luxury hotels, casinos, cable cars, and outdoor sports facilities. In the 19th century, the Swiss and Scandinavian Alps were the centres of recreation and leisure for the higher economic classes of Europe [128]. The golden age of first-generation mountain destinations came to a halt with World War I and the interwar depression that hit the urban tourist elite. Mountain destinations underwent a deep structural crisis that lasted until the 1950s. In the 1960s, the rise in living standards, the widespread use of private cars, and a series of technological innovations in their core product, which was skiing, led to the renaissance of mountain tourism. Up to the 1980s, mountain and ski destinations developed as mass destinations primarily for family skiing holidays in winter and hiking in summer, but from the 1990s onwards, they faced significant competition and have reached a standstill. To recover, they had to implement a plan that allowed them to reposition themselves in the market with dynamic branding and the strategic use of information and communication technologies (ICT).

4.4.2. Contemporary Issues and Challenges in Mountain Destination Planning

In the early 21st century, mountain tourism has been enhanced with a variety of recreational and adventure sports activities. Specifically, mountain biking in the summer and snowboarding in the winter have attracted a younger generation to the mountains, rejuvenating the image of mountain tourism by focusing on a healthy, youthful, and active lifestyle [129]. Similarly, mountain destinations specializing in spa and medical tourism have enriched their services by offering a holistic approach to physical and mental well-being. In the second decade of the 21st century, issues such as climate change and shifts in the global socio-economic landscape are creating new trends that may significantly alter the character of mountain destinations [130,131]. Improved accessibility, rising temperatures, and a broader, diversified range of indoor and outdoor tourist facilities have established mountain tourism as a year-round form of tourism. These new trends include a decline in traditional demand patterns (such as family ski vacations in the winter and hiking in the summer) while at the same time increasing the new, multi-layered, and multi-faceted forms of year-round mountain tourism with a more internationalized demand. There is also a trend towards a "return to the mountains" as a quiet place to work, thanks to increasingly sophisticated information and communication technologies, a trend that positively contributes to local development and the demographic characteristics of these regions.

Mountain destinations are significantly heterogeneous, and there is limited data availability for tourism development, posing numerous challenges in their management. However, there are specific structural characteristics of mountain regions that tourism planning must consider, as recorded in the relevant literature [9,132–135] and are analysed in Table 8.

Geographical isolation and marginalization characterize mountainous areas, which are also distant from centres of political and economic decision-making and have a lower GDP than other geographical regions. This is why the European Union recognized mountainous areas as 'Less Favored Areas' since 1975 [136]. These constraints have led to demographic shrinkage in mountainous areas, especially in Southern European countries. Well-designed tourism is an obvious means of achieving sustainable mountain development, and it is based on decentralized decision-making processes and reinvests the generated revenue to improve the access and networking, innovation, and diversification of the local economic base. The case of the mountainous municipality of Castelmezzano in Southern Italy represents a good practice of community tourism that invested in the youth and leveraged local resources [137]. Mountain destination planning should also enhance multi-level and intelligent governance and local cooperation and participation. Experiences show that innovative governance models can contribute to solving issues between groups with different perspectives, such as local communities and tourists or local producers and environmental organizations. The Alpine Space GaYa project—Governance and Youth in

the Alps, created a toolkit for youth participation in policymaking in the region [138]. Public participation and the construction of collective strategies were the goal for the creation of the 'Mountain Parliament of the Occitanie Region' in France in 2018 [139].

Mountainous areas include ecosystems that are under protection. Notably, 43% of the EU's Natura 2000 areas are located in mountainous regions [136]. Mountainous regions also exhibit high levels of landscape, ecological, and cultural diversity. Tourism, with good planning, may make a substantial beneficial contribution to highlighting the natural heritage of the mountains, as well as the cultural variety and traditional customs of mountain inhabitants. Especially when linked with nature and rural tourism, mountain tourism can contribute to promoting sustainable food systems and adding value to local products. A good example is the case of 'Roter Hahn' (Red Rooster), a network of local producers, experiences, and accommodations under a common brand in South Tyrol. The association now represents 1665 farms (about 60% of all the farms in the region) and 8.3% of all overnight stays in South Tyrol [140]. The variety of resources and landscapes in mountainous areas offers an advantage for the development of diverse forms of tourism that appeal to a broad market. Tourism planning must leverage this advantage through continuous innovation, promotion, and the effective marketing of new trends, sports equipment, and outdoor activities that can be exclusively conducted in the mountains (such as paragliding or mountain biking) [129].

The significance and vulnerability of mountain ecosystems have been recognized in Agenda 21 at the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) in Rio de Janeiro in 1992. Mountain destination planning must incorporate regulatory zoning for protected areas, evaluate the carrying capacity of mountain ecosystems, develop appropriate forms of tourism that are reliant on local resources, effectively manage waste and resources, and adopt a reliable monitoring system for the impacts of tourism development. An important aspect of mountain destination planning is managing the impacts of climate change. As several studies indicate, the number of snow days has decreased by 20–60% since the 1980s [141–143]. This data threatens the ski tourism model that still prevails in many mountain destinations. To counter this, destinations worldwide are implementing specialized plans in three alternative directions: (a) further investment in the same product by moving to higher elevations if possible, modernizing infrastructure, and creating facilities for artificial snow; (b) parallel development in year-round outdoor tourism, as implemented by the Alpine resort Baw Baw in Victoria, Australia [144]; and (c) abandoning ski tourism and repositioning the destination to new markets, such as adventure tourism, as chosen in the case of Monte Tamaro in Lugano, Switzerland since 2003 [145].

The aesthetic quality of the mountain landscape is one of the resources that initially activated these locations as tourist destinations. The emerging trend for mid-term or short-term stays in the mountains opens new opportunities for mountain destinations. To capitalize on this, they must develop innovative tourism experiences throughout the year and invest in infrastructure and the use of new technology. The COVID-19 pandemic has provided an opportunity for remote destinations to attract more remote workers and digital nomads. An example is the Mountain Coworking Alliance, a collective of independent coworking spaces in mountain towns around the world [146]. Planning can ensure a rich tourism experience [147].

Table 8. Contemporary issues and challenges in the planning of mountain destinations.

Mountain Destination Factors	Issues/Challenges	Indicative Strategies
Isolation, Marginalization	Lower GDP Limited resources Population decline Distance from decision-making centres Small businesses—endogenous development Accessibility challenges Seasonality	Restructuring of the production base Innovative models of decentralized governance using technology. Reinvestment of economic benefits at the local level Development of specialized tourism products unique to mountain destinations
Diversity	Variety in landscape and biodiversity	Utilization of specific characteristics as a competitive advantage
Localism	Unique local natural and cultural resources, attractions, and products	Development of Alternative and Special Interest Tourism, highlighting local cultural characteristics, and specialized tourism marketing
Vulnerability	Vulnerability of the natural environment Impacts of climate change	Integrated planning for sustainable development with an emphasis on resilience Implementation of a system for assessing the carrying capacity of tourism and monitoring the impact of tourism. Spatial planning. Declaration of undeveloped areas and protection zones Development of soft forms of tourism Management of visitor flows Information and awareness-raising Climate change management Shift to year-round activities
Aesthetic quality	Aesthetic quality of landscape, services Quality of life	Development of short and medium-term residence. Attracting digital nomads

Source: [9,129,132–137,142,145,148] processed by the author.

5. Discussion

In light of the findings, there are considerable implications that extend both to the academic study of tourism planning and to its practical application in policy formulation. One of the most compelling theoretical implications is the observed shift toward a more integrated approach to tourism planning. This suggests a need for revisiting and potentially expanding existing theories that have historically considered tourism planning in isolation. Now, there is a clear need to examine tourism planning in the broader context of sustainability and local development, enriching the multi-disciplinarity of the field.

Practically, these findings provide an actionable guide for stakeholders, such as local authorities and destination management organizations. There is a growing emphasis on comprehensive strategies that consider a variety of factors from environmental sustainability to cultural and social implications. Additionally, this research indicates that the climate crisis and resilience-building for destinations are now critical components of effective tourism planning. These trends are crucial for stakeholders who are looking to fine-tune their strategies, especially in a global climate where sustainable development is an imperative.

Moreover, the need for customized approaches for different types of destinations is clear. This means that tourism planning must be flexible and adaptive, accommodating the specific challenges and opportunities that come with each type of destination.

For policymakers, these findings suggest that it is time for a re-evaluation of the role of tourism in local planning. The multi-faceted nature of tourism planning should be recognized, and legislation should reflect this complexity. The inclusion of climate-resilient measures, in particular, should be a standard part of tourism policy. Equally critical is the realization that cohesive and integrated local policies require a redesign of local

tourism governance structures. Destination management organizations must reassess their scope, responsibilities, and collaborations to guide destination planning more effectively toward sustainability.

In summary, the findings from this research not only offer a snapshot of current practices and trends in tourism planning but also provide key insights for shaping future strategies and policies. These implications point towards a more integrated and nuanced approach to tourism planning, with far-reaching impacts on academic theory, practical applications, and public policy.

6. Conclusions

The aim of this paper is to analyse the key issues facing tourist destination planning in the 21st century and highlight emerging trends through the review of applied best-practice strategies. For the critical analysis of the research findings, an interpretive framework was established based on basic geographical categorization. To gain a comprehensive understanding of the issues faced by each type of geographical destination, the framework includes a historical perspective on how it has changed over time as a tourism product and as an open adaptive system. From the evaluation of the research outcomes, it is concluded that the use of geographical typologies can serve as the foundation for a framework of critical review of implemented plans, provided that they are enriched with elements that also highlight the other dimensions of the tourism destination.

For the purposes of this research, best practices guidelines, programs, and strategies that have been implemented in tourism destinations globally were reviewed. The analysis of the research findings yielded a range of intriguing conclusions concerning the central challenges faced by tourist destination planning in the 21st century and emerging trends.

(I)   A general conclusion is that there is a dynamic trend of shifting from an approach that views tourism planning as independent from other local policies to an approach that integrates tourism into policies for sustainable local development. The issue of tourism should be incorporated into the broader framework for sustainable development and contribute to addressing the key contemporary challenges faced by different types of destinations. This trend is shaped by intergovernmental organization guidelines for the 2030 Agenda and the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) that were adopted by the United Nations in 2015, and is reinforced through financial programs, certifications, and awards by supranational unions like the European Union.

(II) From the analysis of the best practices across all of the examined geographical types, it emerged that current destination planning is linked to a broad range of strategies related to the environment, spatial and urban planning, innovation, culture, and society, in which tourism plays a significant role. Our research indicates that common strategies across all types of destinations involve participatory governance, resilience, digital transformation, universal accessibility, and green growth. In successful examples, these strategies are interconnected and capitalize on the performance of their outcomes in a long-term plan with the shared goal of improving the quality of life for residents and visitors. Increasingly, destinations are using these strategies to enhance their international image by incorporating them into green marketing initiatives. Our research findings highlight that contemporary destination planning should include various forms of planning such as developmental planning, land-use regulation planning, product design, infrastructure planning, marketing planning, social services planning, and crisis management plan implementation.

(III) The analysis of strategies by the geographical type of the destination has unveiled pronounced convergences and divergences in local planning priorities. These variances are intrinsically linked to the specific geographical, and by extension, demographic and developmental characteristics of each type. A dominant trend across all destination types is the prioritization of integrating environmental practices.

Mountainous and island destinations stand out with their shared concerns about climate change effects, which seem more accentuated for them, often leading to a re-

evaluation of their tourism paradigms. Both face the mutual challenges of isolation and marginalization but tackle these through forward-thinking innovation and technological adaptation. The environmental delicacy inherent to these areas mandates the inception of rigorous regulatory frameworks to shield the local ecosystem.

Coastal and mountain destinations heavily emphasize the enhancement of their tourism product. Their goal is to circumvent the challenges posed by seasonality and to attract a broader visitor spectrum. At the same time, they confront issues of land-use conflicts by combining tourist with spatial planning.

For popular urban, coastal, and island destinations, the management of tourism flow and mitigation of the overtourism phenomenon are primary objectives.

In the realm of urban destinations, there's a discernible thrust towards participatory governance and nurturing creativity. Given their historical roots as cultural beacons, the majority of urban destinations are ardently pursuing strategies to cultivate their creative city profiles.

7. Limitations

This research operates under several methodological assumptions that introduce limitations. The first is the acknowledgment that each tourist destination is inherently unique, and any attempt to classify them inherently involves assumptions and simplifications. However, such classification remains a critical step for scientific exploration and theory development. Secondly, the research relies exclusively on tourism planning cases that have been recognised internationally or in Europe as 'best practices.' These practices are mainly endorsed through studies, management frameworks, and awards by international bodies such as the UNWTO and OECD, as well as initiatives by supranational unions like the European Union. While these cases capture the core trends outlined by these best practice guidelines, they may not be wholly representative of the broader landscape in tourism destination planning. This focus presents an avenue for future research that could potentially employ more quantitative or sample-based methodologies.

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