

SUMMARY OF ARTICLE: [HTTPS://DX.DOI.ORG/10.12795/REA.2021.I42.05](https://dx.doi.org/10.12795/rea.2021.i42.05)

Rooftop terraces as an experiential tourist offer: the case of Madrid (Spain)

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KEYWORDS

Experiential tourism
Hotel terraces
Tourist resources
Landscape consumption
Madrid

TOPIC

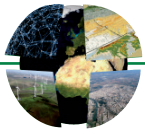
Cities are a priority tourist destination due to the high concentration of leisure and consumer activities offered in them. Tourism is increasingly used as a resource that allows the transformation of the productive system of cities and, in this sense, many tourism activities are continuously transformed, invented or re-invented, so that cities can be competitive in a global scenario (Córdoba & Gago, 2018).

In a highly competitive world, many tourist cities are reinterpreting themselves while proceeding to diversify their known resources in a different way. This diversification of the tourist offer, framed within the demands of postmodern tourists, is often based on the creation of places (Richards, 2020) and new experiences for visitors. In this sense, new tourist spaces emerge that meet the expectations of tourists in search of alternatives.

As part of this dynamics, hotels, a symbol of traditional tourism, have reinvented themselves and adapted to a new demand or created new tourism offers to attract this demand (Babinger & Serrano, 2020). In this context, one of the major current trends in urban hotels, and other unique buildings in the city, is the adaptation of their rooftops to transform them into terraces that attract not only hotel guests, but are also a quality leisure offer for the local population (Serrano & Babinger, 2021).

The rooftop terraces of singular buildings in cities, especially those of hotels in neuralgic urban centres, have become privileged spaces for the consumption of the urban landscape. This landscape thus becomes a resource that can be consumed both by tourists and by the city's inhabitants. In this sense, it is a question of making available to tourism resources that were previously little exploited (Gwiazdzinski, 2009).

Although the landscape forms an intrinsic part of the tourist offer of any place, it has not been considered as a tourist resource in the same way as other facilities (Nogué i Font, 1989). This reality takes on special



importance when taking into account the different facilities that are based, precisely, on the landscape that can be glimpsed from them, such as viewpoints (Trivi, 2018) or observation platforms (Liu & Dewancker, 2018). In this sense, rooftop terraces become prominent platforms for the consumption of the urban landscape by both visiting tourists and city dwellers. They offer a new vision of a landscape that is familiar in principle, but which contains an innovative tourist experience.

OBJECTIVES

The general objective of this research is the study of rooftop terraces in the city of Madrid, as an example of the new tourist demands in urban environments and the needs of post-modern tourists to consume the city through quality tourist experiences.

A sub-objective is to analyse the spatial distribution of hotel terraces, often recently created, using updated maps of their location.

METHODOLOGY

The methodological proposal for the development of the research has been based on the combination of quantitative and qualitative techniques, which have allowed the creation of a georeferenced database of the rooftop terraces of hotels and other unique buildings in the city of Madrid, hitherto non-existent. This database has been designed in such a way that it can easily update any new rooftop terrace that appears in the city of Madrid, as well as incorporating other types of information (attributes) that may be necessary for subsequent research. We would also like to highlight that this design can serve as an example for similar studies in other Spanish cities (Babinger & Serrano, 2020).

In the methodological process, three phases can be distinguished:

1. An exhaustive literature review on experiential tourism and the creation of tourist spaces in cities, focusing specifically on the case of the city of Madrid; in this sense, we realised that there were no specific studies on rooftop terraces as an example of experiential tourism.
2. Intensive search for rooftop terraces open to tourism and leisure in the city of Madrid. This process was carried out by consulting websites both specialised in tourism and general websites. Once the terraces had been identified, the information collected in situ was checked by means of exhaustive fieldwork. Finally, with all the information collected, a database was designed and georeferenced, generating a Geographic Information System using ARC GIS software. This database makes it possible to verify the distribution and location of hotel terraces and their relationship with tourist activity in the city of Madrid and supports the discussion and conclusions of this work.
3. Once the basis of the research had been established, the information contained in the hotels' websites was analysed in greater depth, with special emphasis on the advertising of the terraces.

RESULTS

The analysis of the rooftop terraces offered as a tourist and leisure attraction has shown, firstly, a clear preponderance of hotel terraces over other terraces located in unique buildings in the city of Madrid.

It can be stated that the terraces constitute new quality leisure resources in the tourist centre of the city, focusing on offering new experiences to its users, whether they are tourists or residents.

Once it has been verified that the rooftop terraces are effectively part of the emergence and promotion of new experiential tourism and leisure spaces in the city, special attention has been paid to their distribution in the city of Madrid. The map showing the location of the rooftop terraces in the city clearly shows how the terraces are concentrated in the most central and touristic areas.



This observation gives rise to different interpretations. On the one hand, it is clear that the irruption of the terraces cannot be understood without the relationship with tourism and leisure, especially related to the tourist experience. As we have pointed out, they are not located randomly in the city, but show a very marked spatial concentration in the central almond-shaped area, in the central district and, with greater emphasis, along the Gran Vía and its surroundings.

CONCLUSIONS

The terraces incorporated into the experiential tourism and quality leisure offer in the city of Madrid are the result of a strategy led by both the Madrid City Council and the hotels. These terraces are often recently created and involve the remodelling or reinvention of spaces that had not previously been used in the same way. The opening of rooftop terraces, especially hotel terraces, means the combination of tourism for visitors and leisure for the city's inhabitants, once they have been opened to all publics, without limitations. In this sense, we can speak of a diversification of the experiential and leisure tourism offer in Madrid, especially that related to nightlife.

It is worth noting that the experiential offer of rooftop terraces is not limited to tourists, but is also open to the local leisure of the residents. A combination of tourism and leisure, of consumption of the urban landscape, which is framed along the lines of experiential tourism so that the tourist can participate in the activity of the residents, while the latter, in turn, can enjoy their own city in an exclusive combination of leisure and tourism (Babinger & Serrano, 2020).

This study has shown that the distribution and location of rooftop terraces, and particularly those of hotels, follow a classic pattern, covering the most touristic areas of the city of Madrid, which indicates a clear relationship between them. Thus, it is not surprising that the distribution of rooftop hotel terraces in the city of Madrid follows classical patterns with a concentration in the tourist centre of the city. Specifically, they are distributed predominantly along the Gran Vía and its surroundings, where the best views of the city can be obtained. Those that offer the best experience of Madrid cityscape consumption from the hotel terraces for tourists, visitors and locals.

This concentration does not correspond to recent attempts to diversify tourism territorially throughout the city with the opening of new secondary centres such as, for example, Madrid Río. The distribution of the terraces corresponds to that of the previously existing hotels, thus reinforcing the centrality of tourist and leisure activity in the traditional areas. Therefore, we can say that the current trend of rooftop terraces is part of the commitment to the complete tourist experience, as well as being a new tourist and leisure offer for visitors and residents.

Although it may seem to be a one-off situation, we predict that the increased use of terraces as open spaces, will continue over time. The tourist and scenic experience offered by rooftop terraces is perfectly in line with the new trends of current and future visitors.