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Travel agencies in Spain during the first third of the 20th century. A tourism business in the making

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ABSTRACT

This article analyses travel agencies as tour operators in Spain during the first third of the 20th century. It gives an account of the bibliography available, the sources used and those which can be used. Thanks to the digitalized press, a Media Intensity Index of Travel Agencies is presented that approximates their activity cycles during this period. We analyse its implementation and development through these identified stages. As this work shows, from the mid-1920s onwards, travel agencies in Spain were an important part of the country's 'tourism industry', of the tourist organization and of the nascent Spanish tourism system.

KEYWORDS

Travel agencies; tourist business; tourist industry; tourism; Spain; 1900–1936

Introduction

The age of industrialization brought with it the transport revolution and a revolution in travel. In Great Britain, the transition from minority tourism to tourism with a greater social base was facilitated by the spread of the steamship and the railways. These made large-scale leisure travel possible. The expanded mobility led to a revolution in the way of travel, with the idea of the collective management of travel, thus avoiding directly managing passengers with each of the service providers. This was what Thomas Cook did from 1841 onwards and, above all, during the Great Universal Exhibition in London in 1851. This is how travel agencies were born (Brendon, 1991; Rae, 1891). Contemporary tourism is based on fast means of transport and agents that act in the different phases of the journey: from information and propaganda about the destinations to the provision of services at the actual destination.

By the beginning of the 20th century, advertising was no longer considered sufficient to meet all the 'demands of modern tourism organization' (Mariotti, 1927–1928). Travelling now involved tickets, travel assistance, accommodation, guides or interpreters once you had arrived at the location, etc. These functions would become those of a travel agency. This does not mean that all trips, or even most of them, were intermediary. But, without a doubt, one of the characteristics of contemporary travel is the progressive development of these intermediaries (Pimlott, 1977 (1947 1a), Chapter 11). Through agencies, travel and destinations become products which can be marketed. Those who went to them paid a price in

exchange for services and the guarantee of a less uncertainty. The user was buying tangible services but also intangible concepts such as trust, security or comfort.

At the international level, starting in Great Britain, the history of travel agencies began in the mid-19th century, as has been said, expanding to other countries such as France (Gerbod, 1983; Razvozaeva, 2007) and the United States (Santis, 1978). In Italy, on the other hand, it was in the last quarter of the 19th century when the first travel agencies appeared, specifically, in Milan, a city that had a prominent role in the process of opening up to tourism after Italian unification. This city, located in the centre of the Padana Plain, was experiencing significant economic and social development, as well as having a long tradition of political, economic and cultural ties with the most advanced European countries. In this context, Massimiliano Chiari moved 'Le Touriste d'Italie' to Milan, a newspaper that was published until then in Firenze and was written in French for the foreign colony in Italy. Now, a year earlier, Chiari had already begun his activity as a travel agent, most likely in collaboration with the French agency Lubin. This was a clear example of the collaboration between companies from different nations that occurred in many other cases, in Italy as in other countries, including Spain (Vallejo & Larrinaga, 2018a). Specifically, Chiari had organized trips to the Universal Exhibition in Paris in 1878. However, as of 1885 there are more precise data on the trips organized by Chiari. Since 1900, nevertheless, coinciding with a new exhibition in Paris and with the Holy Year in Rome, is when an expansion of the intermediary travel business is observed (Visentin, 1995). Though, it was from 1919 on, with the creation of the National Entity delle industrie turistiche (Enit), when there was true expansion of the intermediary travel business, thanks to the creation within the Italian Consortium per gli uffici di viaggio and tourism (Mariotti, 1933). With the remodelling of the Enit in 1926, the Italian Tourism Company was created, in charge of the commercial organization of tourism, leaving very little room for action for traditional travel agencies and imposing, under fascism, wide limitations on the free market (Berrino, 2011).

Beyond the different national or regional realities, the truth is that the expansion of travel agencies occurred even in other European countries where the tourism industry was not so consolidated, especially after World War One and from the twenties onwards (Tissot, 2003; Zuelow, 2011, 2016). After all, 'tourism policies and practices always emerged out of a transnational dialogue between professionals from countries with the most diverse forms of government' (Schipper, Tchoukarine, & Bechmann Pedersen, 2018; Semmens, 2011, p. 195).

Spain was not an exception either, as we will see in this work, whose main objective is to explain the arrival and diffusion in this country of these tour agencies until the Civil War of 1936–1939. This is a subject that is practically unprecedented in the history of Spanish tourism. Here we analyse when travel agencies appeared in Spain, their character as international or national agencies, how many there were, what they did, what services they provided, how they were organized and what role they played in the budding Spanish tourism system during the first third of the 20th century, when 'modern tourism' began in Spain, that is, when tourism was conceived as a business.

In fact, we have few data to know the extension and weight of these agencies' activity, but it seems to be limited. However, these agencies were the embryo of a crucial sector for the current Spanish economy, a country that is now an important global player. Moreover, tourism was one of the key sectors of the growth and the economic development after the fifties. We are reminded that, according to the World Tourism Organization, Spain is the second country in the world in terms of both foreign tourism income and tourist arrivals:

tourism accounts for 11.1 per cent of Spanish GDP and 13.3 per cent of total employment. From this starting point, it seems more interesting to go back and trace the origins of this sector, focusing in this case on the travel agencies.

In this sense, it is important to clarify the difference between the travel agency (retailer) and the tour operator (wholesaler). A tour operator is a company that designs and sells packages, many parts of which are predetermined: transport and accommodation – at least – and sometimes all types of proposed leisure activities, such as excursions, events, etc. Retail agencies sell tour operators' products and cover all kinds of services and travel needs of the tourist. Tour operators are newcomers to the world of tourism if we compare them to other activities such as hospitality or transport, and came to exist after travel agencies or as a specialisation of them. In Europe, proper tour operators came into existence after the Second World War and their birthplace was the United Kingdom. The availability of aircraft and pilots after the war, the low cost of fuel, and the high cost, on the contrary, of travel in regular airlines, were all factors that contributed to the creation of companies offering a new travel product: a significantly reduced price in exchange for restriction of choice regarding the date of travel, transport or accommodation. This type of offer opened the possibility of travel to a much larger segment of the population. The creation of wholesale travel agencies in Spain took place later than in the rest of Europe: in the 1950s and the first half of the 1960s. There was simply not enough demand and the few organised packages managed by pioneering travel agencies were enough to meet what demand there was. In consequence, in our period of study there were mainly travel agencies.

Materials and methods

At the beginning of the 20th century, we observed the presence of travel agencies in the most economically developed countries and tourist destinations, which operated internally and in the global market of the era. These agents worked alongside the major railway and shipping companies which marketed and promoted their products directly or through these new tourist agencies. In turn, in the smaller countries or those with less potential, two processes can be observed. On the one hand, the major international travel agencies began to appear, bringing tourists or recruiting them for trips to other external destinations. On the other hand, native tourism agents were emerging in an incipient and local way. These modest national companies were progressively incorporated into the corresponding tourism systems under development. Spain is one such case.

Historical studies on travel agencies in Spain are scarce. We have no systematic studies. There is one company biography, financed by the company itself. This is the case with *Viajes Marsans* (1910) and with the more recent tour operator *Iberostar*, which was created from an agency founded in the period under consideration here, *Viajes Baleares* (1930), almost immediately turned into *Viajes Iberia* (1932). Another example, outside the period in question, but with roots in it, is *Viajes Barceló*, created in 1931 as a coach company (San Román, 2017, pp. 53–59; Unceta, 1986; VV. AA., 2006). We also have some general studies that address the issue tangentially (González Morales, 2003; Moreno, 2007; Pellejero, 1999, pp. 56–57; Vallejo, Lindoso, & Vilar, 2016). The regional histories of tourism also echo this type of business, especially in the Balearic Islands and Catalonia (Buades, 2004; Cirer, 2009; Palou, 2012).

Without an adequate bibliography, one must draw up a history of the origin of travel agencies in Spain using primary contemporary sources. Business archives would be the most direct route but for this period we have not found any, although we have found documentation generated by some of these operators, such as advertisements and, above all, advertising magazines: *Viajes Marsans* published the *Revista de Turismo* (1931) and *Thomas Cook & Son* published *La Revista de Viajes* between 1924 and 1936, which we have consulted. Another source is the Mercantile Registries, in which agencies incorporated as companies are registered and therefore very useful for case studies in this period and in later periods. We also have two specific tax sources. Firstly, the provincial books of the Profit Tax and the settlement proceedings of this tax paid, as of 1900, by the agencies constituted as public limited companies; we have been able to verify it for *SADIT (Sociedad Anónima de Iniciativas Turísticas: Vigo, 1933–1936)*. Secondly, the Administrative Statistics on Industrial and Commercial Contributions (ICC), which is one of the sources used in this article. It registers the ‘Agencies in which any or all of the following operations are verified: organizing excursions, providing travel news, contracting or providing railway tickets, accommodation, cars, etc.’, except those existing in the Basque Country and Navarre due to their particular tax system. This source has allowed us to produce a statistic of travel agencies between 1927 and 1933. Despite its time limit and the fact that it does not include those established as public limited companies (less in number), it is very useful as these were the years of the first boom in travel agencies in Spain. This is a source that has also recently been used to study other tourism companies (spas and hotels) and, within a more academic tradition, the Spanish industrial history, following the pioneering work of Román Perpiñá in 1936 and Jordi Nadal in 1973.

The provincial, regional and national Yearbooks of Industry, Commerce, etc. are also very valuable, especially those written since 1929. An example of this is the Rivadeneyra publishing house’s *Anuario Industrial y Artístico de España*. More generally, they are of great help, in addition to some tourist guides and magazines of the agencies themselves, travel magazines and those published by the Tourism Promotion Societies or Initiative Unions: *Barcelona Atracción* (since December 1910), *Valencia Atracción* (since 1926) and *Aragón* (since 1925). Finally, the importance of periodicals, especially those accessible through digital newspaper libraries, should be highlighted. Digitalized press and keyword guided searches allow time series and therefore statistical series to be made. Vallejo et al. (2016, Vallejo, Lindoso, & Vilar, 2018) have used this methodology to study the evolution of ‘tourism’ in Spain. They have prepared a first Index of Media Intensity of Tourism for 1900 to 1939, enabling the identification of tourist cycles in Spain during this period. They have shown that these cycles are highly correlated to the tourism cycles of Western countries and with the real GDP of the sixteen industrialized nations and the actual GDP of Spain, using the Angus Maddison series (Vallejo et al., 2016, p. 143). Using the same methodology, we have compiled a Media Intensity Index of Travel Agencies (MIITA) for 1882 to 1940. This is where we will start, completing its data with that of the ICC Statistics for 1927–1933. With this data, we will explain the appearance and evolution of travel agencies in Spain up to the Civil War.

The cycles of travel agencies in Spain: appearance and long-term evolution (1882–1940)

To create our MIITA we have used the digital archives of the National Library of Spain (NLS). The Spanish keywords *agencia de viaje* [travel agency] and *agencia de turismo* [tourist agency]

have been used as keywords because in the Spanish case both terms were used to refer to this type of business. A time series has been prepared, from 1882 to 1940 based on the number of pages in which they appear. From this series, an index based on 100 in 1913 was constructed, the MIITA (NLS), which is shown in graphs 1 and 2.

The general conclusions drawn from this index are as follows. The first is that travel agencies have been present in the media in Spain since the 1880s, although this presence is very discontinuous at first and the references made by the press allude to some news from foreign companies, such as Cook, with no direct relationship to Spain which had already managed some trips to Spain (Brendon, 1991). It was not until 1902 that a greater presence of these agents in the newspapers was seen, especially a regular and permanent presence already concerning Spain, precisely when tourism as a business activity began to take shape in the country.¹

From these early years of the 20th century onwards, our MIITA series reflects a similar evolution to that of the Tourism Media Intensity Index (TMII) of Vallejo et al. (2016), which includes the different stages or cycles of tourism in the first third of the 20th century (Figures 1 and 2). Thus, we identify a phase of take-off and growth until 1914, which reveals the same expansion in Spain that was observed in international tourism until the First World War (a phase also known as the tourism *Belle Époque*). This was followed by a second setback until 1920–1921. After this there was a period of recovery, with difficulties and some decline, first, and a clear recovery from 1924 to 1927 to the peak of 1929, which was also a peak in international tourism, as explained by Ogilvie (1933) and Norval (1936). Subsequently, between 1929 and 1936, which began with the international economic crisis in 1929, a short phase was observed with significant oscillations, first of clear regression until 1932 and then of intense recovery until 1934, so that a new high was then seen in the media presence of travel

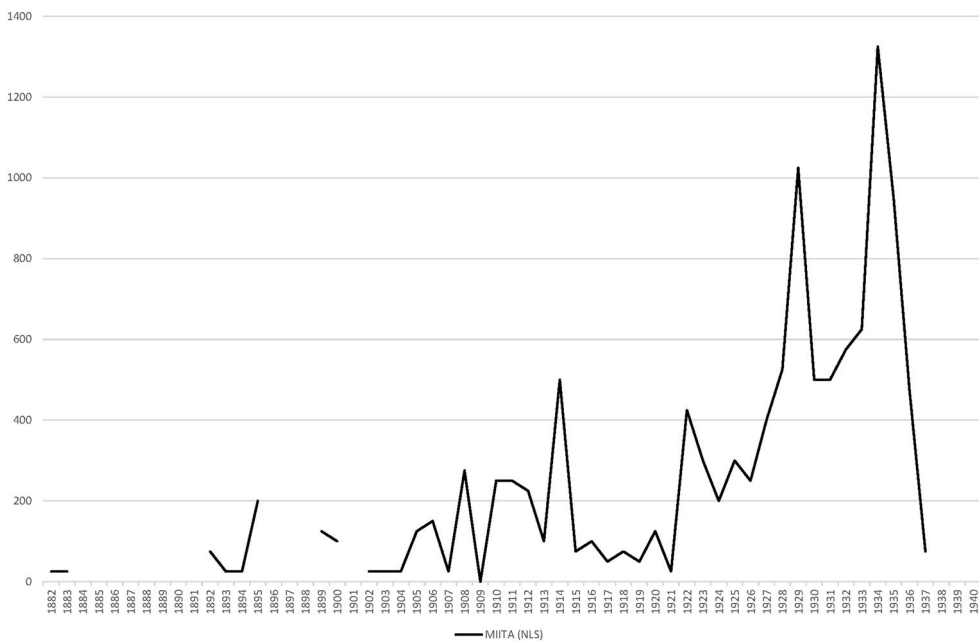


Figure 1. Media Intensity Index of Travel Agencies, 1882–1940 (1913 = 100).

Source: Biblioteca Nacional de España, *Hemeroteca digital* (mayo 2017) [Source: NLS, digital library, May 2017].

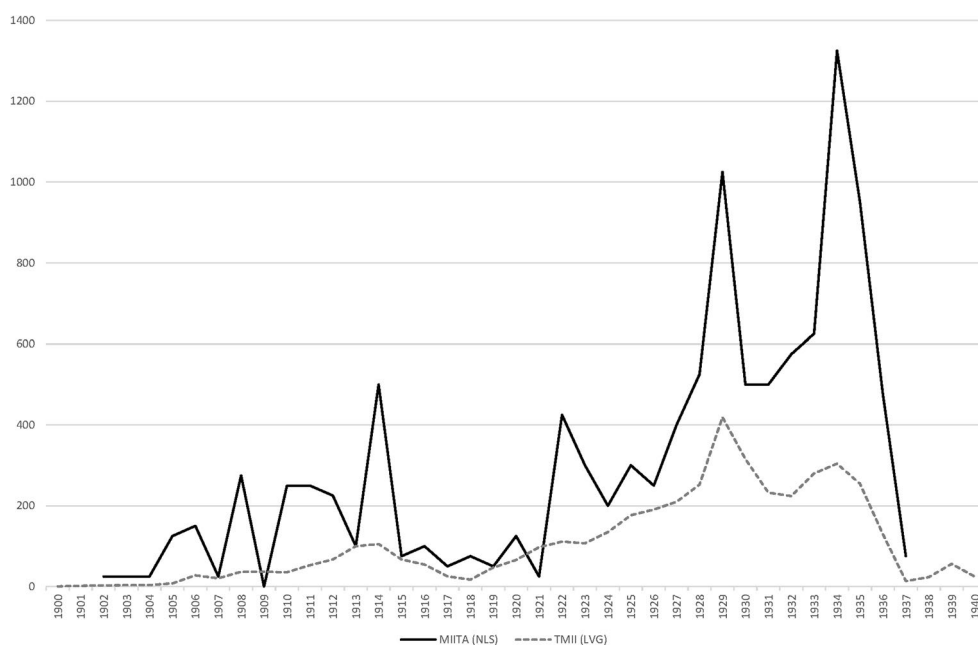


Figure 2. Tourism Media Intensity Index (TMII) and Media Intensity Index of Travel Agencies (MIITA), 1900–1939.

Source: Vallejo et al. (2016) and the same as in Figure 1.

agencies, which we will discuss later. Finally, we note the clear collapse from 1936 (or, more precisely, from the second half of that year) due to the outbreak of the Civil War. References to travel agencies disappeared from the press during the war or were reduced to a minimum.²

Finally, a comparison of the TMII and the MIITA shows that the media presence of the ‘agencies’ as opposed to the generic ‘tourism’ was parallel but more dynamic, especially in the 1920s and 1930s, precisely when these tour operators were expanding their number and activity in the Spanish tourism scene (Graph 2).

The period from 1930 to 1936 deserves to be explained in some detail. It is generally claimed that the years of the Republic were bad for tourism in Spain. We believe that we are faced with a commonplace situation, that some of the data we handle contradicts this. According to our figures, obtained from the League of Nations, in the 1930s Spain was an emerging country in international tourism since in 1931 it occupied the thirteenth place in the world ranking of tourist countries and by 1933 it had climbed to the ninth place (Vallejo, 2018; Vallejo et al., 2018; Vallejo, 2019). From this point of view, the Republic was more complex and dynamic in this area of tourism and agencies than is assumed to be the case, which makes necessary a more nuanced explanation. The first is that our indices show an oscillating evolution of tourism in general and of agencies in particular, with evident signs of recovery from 1933 onwards. The second is that this data from MIITA and TMII is consistent with that provided by other tourism indicators. Thus, the figures of our MIITA are consistent with the evolution of the figures corresponding to the travel agencies that were subject to the Industrial and Commercial Contribution (ICC), which we know for 1927–1933. The number of agencies subject to that tax across the country increased from 17 in 1927 to 46 in 1929, almost trebling. In 1929, 28% of these agencies were located in Barcelona (Table 1).

Table 1. Contributing travel agencies in Spain by ICC, 1927–1933.

	Barcelona	Madrid	Remaining provincial capitals	Cities with over 20,000 inhabitants	Places with less than 20,000 inhabitants	Total
1927	4	5	7		1	17
1928	10	5	14		6	35
1929	13	8	15	2	8	46
1930	11	7	17		4	39
1931	8	5	22		4	39
1932	11	6	26		4	47
1933	16	7	29	1	8	61
1927–1933 (Media)	10	6	19	2	5	41

Source: Estadística Administrativa de la CIC, [Administrative Statistics of the ICC], 1927–1933.

Note: it does not include travel agencies in the form of public limited companies.

After the peak of 1929, coinciding with the Ibero-American Exhibition in Seville and the International Exhibition in Barcelona, two major events that had a considerable stake in the promotion of tourism in the country abroad, there was a decline in the number of tourist agencies. This was more intense and somewhat more lasting in the case of Barcelona (1930–1932) than in Spain as a whole (1930–1931). This was even more the case in towns with fewer than 20,000 inhabitants than it was in provincial capitals, where we did not see a decline but a slow and steady increase in the number of travel agencies (Table 1).

ICC statistics reveal therefore that the 1929 agency bubble had burst in Barcelona, at least in the short term in 1930–1931. The recovery came from 1932 onwards, so that by 1933, with 16 agencies, the maximum of 13 agencies reached in 1929 had been exceeded. The travel business had taken root in the Catalan capital. In Spain as a whole, recovery came sooner. The setback bottomed out in 1930 and stabilized in 1931. Also, from 1932 onwards, a recovery can be observed, but more intense than in Barcelona, so that the number of businesses dedicated to travel in 1929 was already exceeded with 47 establishments (Table 1). The peak was reached in 1933 throughout Spain, with 61 establishments, 30% more than in the previous year. This is the last date we have in this ICC statistic. Even so, these ICC figures practically coincide with our series on the media presence of travel agencies. According to these, one must question the supposed tourist crisis in Spain during the Republican years, which is generally referred to. In terms of travel agencies, if we consider the number of those that opened and traded for tax purposes, this was only partial for the truly critical years of 1931–1932 but not the case in the years immediately following.

The presence of travel agencies in the Spanish press in recent years provides arguments to support that in the 1930s (until the Civil War), and clearly from 1932 onwards, the intensity of the tourism business was greater than in the 1920s, (with the exception of 1929, an anomalous year for being an extraordinarily good year). Graph 3, which presents the absolute values aggregated by the five-year periods of the media presence of travel agencies between 1880–1884 and 1935–1939, clearly confirms what we are saying. The maximum number of press references to the activities and products of travel agencies was reached during the five-year period from 1930 to 1934. Even the values of 1935 and 1936, when the presence of agencies in the press fell back from the 1934 peak, were higher than all the years before 1928.

With verifiable economic and political difficulties, the fact is that the data available for this period of the Republic shows that we are faced with a reality of tourism that is vibrant from a sociological point of view (broadening the social base of tourism), from an economic

point of view (widening the tourism businesses) and from an organizational point of view (enhanced national and provincial tourism systems and organizations). The regional case of the Balearic Islands, where tourism acted at least until 1935 as a countercyclical economic sector, in contrast to industry and trade in goods, whose foreign market fell dramatically (Figure 3), is very clear in this respect, but not the only one.

The importance and dynamism offered by travel agencies, stimulated by international (and national) demand that tends to rise amidst the ups and downs of the short term, place us in the midst of the years of the Republic, before what appears to be an example of 'creative destruction' in a general crisis, as J.A. Schumpeter called the creative responses to the economic crises throughout history.

Travel agencies in Spain in the first third of the 20th century

The documentary trail left by tourism agencies in Spain is considerable but not compact. Therefore, we believe it is useful to organize this section in the major tourist stages and agencies described above. With each one, we will proceed to its general characterization and present the main agencies and their lines of activity.

The embryonic years

The first stage to consider is from 1900 to 1914. This was an expansive phase for tourism in Spain (Vallejo et al., 2016). Our Index also shows an eruption of tourist agencies in Spain and an expansion of their activity, as well as number, at least from 1905. The first testimonies about Cook concerning Spain in the 20th century are from this year. They refer to the

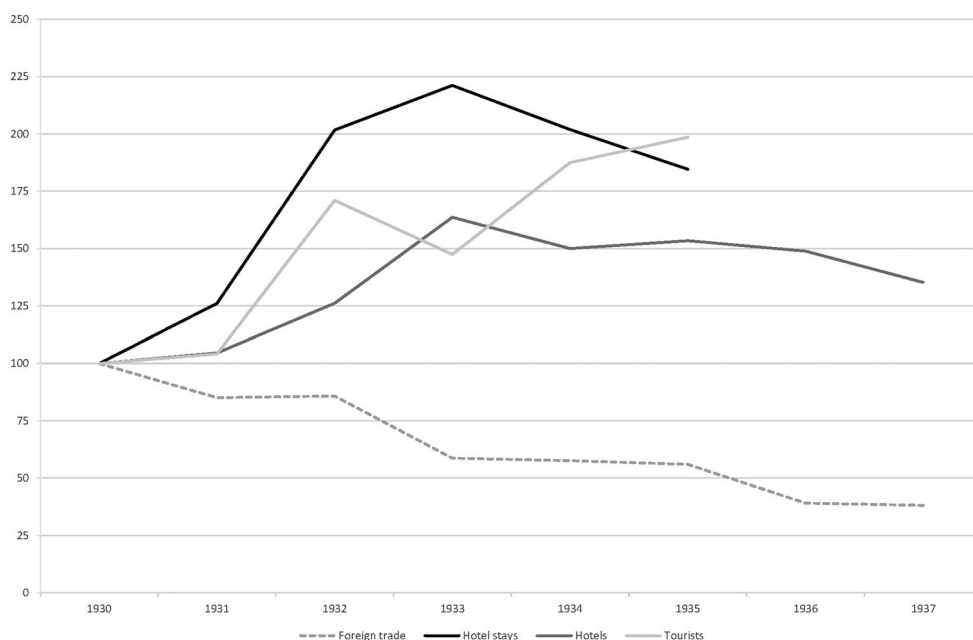


Figure 3. Foreign trade (in metric tonnes) and tourist indicators in Mallorca (hotels, hotel stays and tourists), 1930–1937 (1930 = 100).

Source: Barceló (1966). Prepared by the authors.

stopovers of their sea voyages for pleasure in ports such as Vigo and Algeciras and the first trip organized by this agency for Spaniards to the Holy Land and Egypt.³ From that year on, the larger presence and creation of operators to and in Spain has been documented. So, in the embryonic years the main actors were:

1. the traditional operators, foreign and domestic railway companies, in the Spanish tourist market, and foreign (Booth Line, Real Mala Inglesa, etc.) and domestic (Transatlantic, Transmediterránea) shipping companies, who were expressly working in tourism or who incorporate tourist travel as part of their business. These were the cases of the *Compañía del Norte* or the *Railways of the West* organizing circular journeys from Madrid to Extremadura (monastery of Guadalupe) and Portugal. Other major railway operators also expressed their interest in Spain, such as the *Orleans Railways*, which in 1910 organized 'a series of excursions to Andalusia' for spring and autumn, 'with economy tickets and circular tickets', which it promoted in the well-kept brochure *Trips to Spain*.⁴
2. the foreign travel agents moving their organized clients to and from Spain. The case of Cook, in 1905–1906, is one of several. (Though there are some testimonies of Cook's trips to Spain in the 19th century). It is worth noting that these foreign operators made the leap directly to Spain. They did it via at least two channels. One, by opening one or more offices. That was the case with Cook, since 1892 in Madrid. By July 1914, the *Thomas Cook & Son* travel and ticket agency had two 'agencies' in Spain: in Barcelona and Madrid, where it also had a 'branch' in the *Hotel Palace*.⁵ They managed trips of Spaniards travelling abroad and trekking within Spain itself. The second way was the establishment of a strictly Spanish branch or local office, following an agreement with a Spanish agent. This was the strategy of *Maurice Junot*, who had been operating since at least 1893 from Paris with organized outbound tourism trips to neighbouring countries such as Switzerland, with his *Société Française de Voyages Pratiques*⁶ (later *Viajes Exprinter*). His Spanish agent, from 1905 to 1906, was the newspaper *La Correspondencia de España*, which at that time printed some 50,000 copies and over 100,000 by 1913. The Spanish branch was called, like the French parent company, *Agencia de Viajes Prácticos*. It offered, from the pages of *La Correspondencia*, outbound tourist trips to Paris and London. By 1906, it had 'taken more than 2,000 travellers abroad'. After the First World War, *Viajes Prácticos*, already under the name of *Exprinter*, continued to be one of the most important agents of tourism in Spain, with this same strategy of alliance with some of the most widespread Madrid newspapers, although this is not a unique case. In 1908 *El Liberal* (Madrid) sold the '*Viajes de Lujo de El Liberal*' [Luxury Trips of El Liberal] (France-Switzerland-Italy) which the *Chiari-Sommariva* Agency had prepared.⁷ Another of the tourist agencies, the branch of a French foreign operator, was *Express Universal* (1908), a branch of *Casa L. Desbois*, with business in Paris, Bordeaux, Marseille, Rome, etc... It had two offices in Spain in 1908, in Barcelona and in Palma de Mallorca.⁸
3. the Spanish agents. In several cases, they came into it with previous experience in shipping or foreign exchange banking operations. This is why consignees and bankers were the protagonists of some of the first tourist agency initiatives. These were the cases of *Durán*, *Conde o Barreras* in Vigo or *M. Condeminas e Hijos*, agents in charge of consignment in Barcelona since the 19th century and architects in the 1920s of one of the great Spanish agencies of the time. The links between finance and travel agencies are found in the aforementioned *Marsansrof*, from the *Marsans* bank in Barcelona (1910) although

this was not the only example. In 1905 the Hispano-Portuguese Touring Club was founded in Madrid to encourage reciprocal trips to Spain and Portugal, a market already operated by national railway companies since at least the 1870s.

In addition to these, the following travel agencies (which operated in the years listed in brackets) stand out: *Lubin (Foyé)* (1909) travel agencies based in Barcelona,⁹ *Viajes Arco* (1910) in Madrid, *Agencia de Turismo de Agustí y Ferrer* (1912) in Barcelona,¹⁰ the *Agencia de Turismo Club Mallorca de Palma de Mallorca*¹¹ and, in the years of the Great War, *La Caravana* Travel Agency (1916) in Madrid.¹² Equally important was the formation of the company *Turismo Hispano-Americano* in 1912–1913, aimed above all at organizing ‘civic pilgrimages’ of ‘all the Spaniards of America’ to Spain.¹³

The milestones that pushed the travelling sector in these years were the large events which were an extraordinary motivation for some foreign companies to operate in Spain. For example, Cook opened his office in Barcelona in 1908 for the important *Exposición Internacional de Bellas Artes* [International Fine Arts Exhibition]. And he also went ahead in Madrid. That same year, a great ‘Madrid Pilgrimage’ to Lourdes and Rome was promoted on the occasion of the ‘fiftieth anniversary of the apparition of the Blessed Virgin’ and the ‘Jubilee Year of His Holiness Pius X’, whose organization was contracted by this British agency.¹⁴ Also, in 1908, with the *Conmemoraciones de Zaragoza* [Commemorations of Zaragoza], a cycle of events began in relation to the Centenary of the War of Independence (1808–1814) and Cook took advantage of it. In 1909 it was the Holy Year of Compostela and the great Galician Regional Exhibition in Santiago de Compostela. That same year the Regional Exhibition of Valencia was held and in 1910 the *Exposición Nacional* (Valencia). 1908 had also been the year of the First International Congress of Tourism (Spanish-French-Portuguese), followed in Spain by that of San Sebastián (1909) and that of Madrid (5th Congress, 1912). The first tour operators in Spain were very attentive to this source of great celebrations.

In short, the early years of the 20th century were embryonic for travel agencies in Spain, whose business possibilities and in some cases continuity were cut short by the World War. In any case, without a foreign market (receptive and outbound), some of them turned their activities towards domestic tourism, as did *Marsans*.

The formative years and the boom

The embryonic years gave way, in the 1920s, to the formative and boom years of Spanish agencies. They had a national and international presence, through their branches, their domestic and outbound tourism businesses and their integration into the International Federation of Travel Agencies (IFTA), in which some Spanish agents held leading positions. They became a notable part of the incipient Spanish tourism system and a relevant part of the Spanish tourism industry. Its dynamism was well above the average of the tourist organization in this period as can be inferred from graph 2. After the World War, a new stage began, as we saw, that lasted until July 1936, with two great moments, the one from 1919 to 1929 and that which occupies the 1930s.

The period that begins in 1919 is marked by the World War and its consequences. The countries that participated wanted to reactivate their economy, including international travel, when the country was a tourist country, that is, with a positive tourist scale. France was a clear example. The same can be said of neutral countries with robust tourism sectors

as they suffered from the contraction of tourism. Destruction, inflation and social conflict did little to help at first. However, the travel landscape began to change very quickly. In fact, some leading European tourism nations made institutional reforms to their tourism agencies (or created new ones) to boost the travel movement, as we see in Italy and France. The explosion in the motorization of land transport was one of the technical supports for the expansion of travelling in the 1920s (Vilar & Vallejo, 2018).

Spain participated in this expansive movement. Tourism companies in general, and agencies in particular, were the architects and participants. Moreover, once the war was over, there was a renewed interest on the part of European tour operators in Spain, not so much as a tourist destination (which it also was) but above all as an issuing market. Neutrality had enriched the country and thus the incomes of the wealthier classes. On the other hand, the peseta, strengthened from the early 1920s until 1928, made the destination of Spain relatively more expensive and made travel abroad cheaper for Spaniards who could travel.

This panorama would mark the rhythm of travel agencies at least until 1928–1929, and the following features can be distinguished in this period. First, there was a renewed interest of foreign agencies in Spain in outbound tourism. Interest began in 1919. It came first from France and then from Switzerland, Italy or Portugal. On this occasion there were several routes of penetration.

One originated from the official national initiative of another country (combined with the private tourism organization of that country). France is possibly the most prominent case. It set up the first French tourist office abroad in Barcelona in 1919. French official media reported that as early as 1920 some 100,000 Spaniards visited France. In 1920, the first

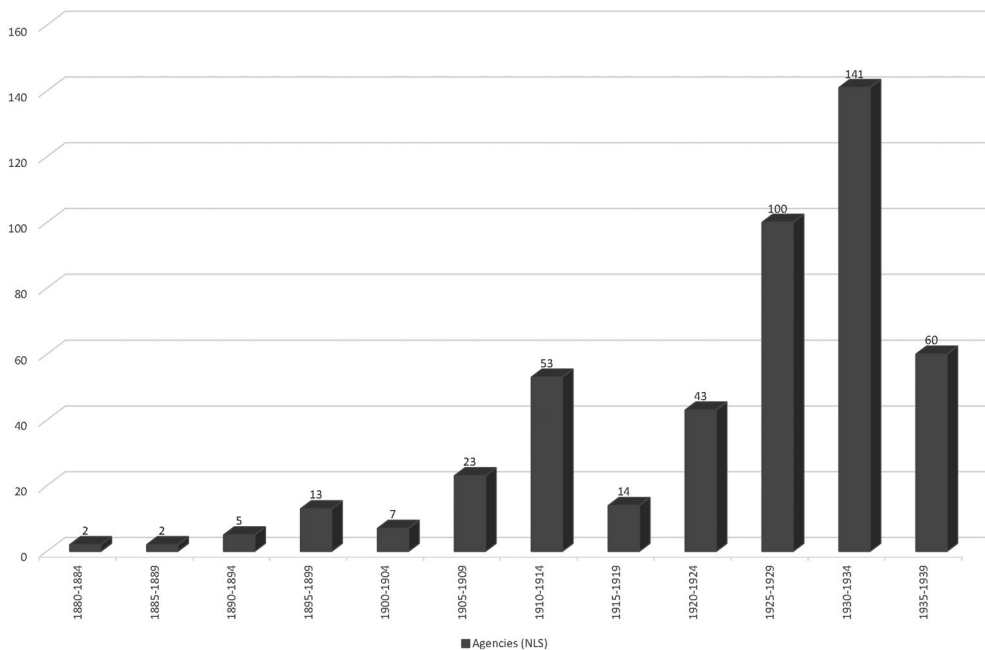


Figure 4. Media presence of travel agencies, 1882–1950 (referenced in 5-year periods in the periodical press).

Source: Biblioteca Nacional de España, *Hemeroteca digital* (mayo 2017) [Source: NLS, digital library, May 2017].

commercial airline was inaugurated between Toulouse, Barcelona and Alicante and the electrification of the railway line with Spain. In 1925 and 1930, two more French tourist offices were opened in Seville and Madrid. At the same time, there was a proliferation of advertisements for trips organized to France and offered by tourist agencies in Spain. In 1932, Marcel Gautier provided average annual figures of 528,000 Spaniards visiting France in 1924–1928 (Gautier, 1932).

Another way for the agencies to enter was to grant representation in Spain to another agency. This was done in 1920 by the '*Compañía francesa de Navegación Sud-Atlantique*' with '*la Agencia de Coches-Camas (Wagons-Lits)*'.¹⁵

A third way was the establishment of 'general agents for Spain'. This was done, for example, by the *Navigazione Generale Italiana* (NGI-Genoa), which had agents in Spain such as *Italia-América Sociedad de Empresas Marítimas* (Barcelona, Madrid) and Eusebio Cafranga, from San Sebastián. Cafranga (who had been in the import-export business since at least 1918) thus entered the travel business. He also worked in 1923 with the official Italian operator *Ferrovie dello Stato*, through the ENIT travel and tourism offices, under the name of *Compañía Italiana de Turismo* (Mariotti, 1927–1928). In 1926, when he was already an important agent, Eusebio Cafranga continued to work with outbound tourism to France, this time as an agent of International Tourism (Paris).¹⁶

A fourth means of access for agencies, already introduced before the World War, was to act with a branch or brand in Spain, in combination with a newspaper. *Exprinter* continued to do so and stopped working with *La Correspondencia de España* to operate with *La Voz*. An important part of its business was the trips to other countries by rail and, increasingly, by bus, whose presence gained importance from 1928–1929 onwards. The interest of foreign agencies in working in the Spanish market, both issuer and non-issuer, as well as that of Spanish agencies in this business, was such that one of the conclusions approved at the 1st National Tourism Conference held in Barcelona in April 1923 was to seek the approval of the Ministry of Development to modify the tax provisions that taxed the capital of foreign travel agencies established in Spain, in order to facilitate their establishment in the country, due to their importance as an auxiliary means of tourism.¹⁷

This was, therefore, the scenario in which tourism agencies in Spain worked in the early 1920s. In this context, foreign agencies which were already established, such as Thomas Cook, continued their expansion process in this country. Since 1924, Cook has been publishing *La Revista de Viajes* for the Spanish public, with a whole range of products and destinations for Spaniards in Spain and abroad, including its famous '*forfait*', a popular tourist product that was not exclusive to Cook. That same year, the second edition of his Handbook for Spain was published.

The following year, 1925, was of special importance for Spanish agencies and the expansion of their business and activity as players in the world tourism market. It was the year in which they confederated, taking advantage of the organization of the 6th International Congress in Spain of the IFTA, founded in 1919. This VI Congress was held in October 1925 in Barcelona. It was promoted by the International Federation, then made up of 23 nations and was attended by the different agents linked to the 'tourism industry' in Catalonia, where regional tourism congresses had already been held in 1919 and 1921. The *Banca Marsans* played a fundamental role in its management, to promote tourism in Spain. Of course, its celebration at such an early date reflects the growing importance of Spanish agencies in the

international context and, above all, the organizational capacity of *Marsans* and the tourist relevance of Barcelona in those years.¹⁸ This was the first time that a congress of the International Federation took place in Spain, which indicates the trust IFTA authorities had in the Spanish organizers, and, above all, this represented a milestone that reflects the increasing importance of the sector.

But 1925 was, on the other hand, the year in which *Viajes Marsans* began a turning point with its territorial expansion, when it opened offices in Madrid and Seville and allied itself with American Express. A business strategy also began, of which a nationalist discourse was part. So, in 1927, when it was expanding throughout Spain, it was presented as a 'genuinely Spanish agency'. In 1928, the *Marsans* travel agency achieved autonomy, at least formally, from the banking business, continuing its collaboration with American Express. In 1931 *Viajes Marsans* had branches in 9 Spanish cities and branches in 12 other cities throughout Spain and operated with the alliance of FAVE, S.A. agencies since its creation (1933) in the issuing market to Spain, from Paris and London.

But *Marsans* was not a unique case. From 1923 to 1925, agents and agencies multiplied in Spain, for different markets: issuer, internal and, perhaps less, receptive. Three examples were the Spanish Society of Tourism (existing in 1922), the shipping company *Ybarra* (1923), which offered trips between Spain and America or *Sommariva*, with an Italian origin, which reappeared in 1925 and remained.¹⁹ This expansive process was clearly visible from 1925 and accelerated with the expectations of the 1929 exhibitions and a clearly expanding world tourism market.

These were founding years in the Spanish agencies as a remarkable list of the important ones appeared. Among them, *Viajes Hispania*²⁰ (1928) and *Barcelona Express* (1928), linked to *Banco Urquijo Catalán*.²¹ From 1929 there was also the *Compañía Española de Turismo* [Spanish Tourism Company]. In turn, *Bakumar* (1921) had seven branches that year, while *Wagons-Lits*, the largest tour operator in Spain, had 5 'agencies' and 17 'sub-agencies'²² open in 1927, to which must be added 3 in Gibraltar, 4 in Melilla, 2 in Porto and 1 more 'agency' in Lisbon.²³ In July 1929, when it had already absorbed Thos. Cook & Son, it announced that it had 17 'branches in the Iberian Peninsula', of which there were 14 in Spain, 2 in Portugal and 1 in Gibraltar.²⁴

In the case of Spanish travel agencies, they were mostly family businesses or unlimited liability companies. Some managed to have several branches in different Spanish cities, although others operated for a long time in a single location (for example, *Viajes Cafranga* in San Sebastián). Even on a few occasions, they did not dedicate themselves exclusively to the tourism business itself, but also to other enterprises related to international trade (*Viajes Cafranga*) or banking (*Marsans* and *Viajes Cafranga*, for example). That is, they were able to diversify their businesses.²⁵

On the other hand, among the tourist products they offered, they would highlight the organization of ski pass trips to different places in Spain and abroad. This modality would include organized trips to congresses and exhibitions, as well as pilgrimages. Other products offered by the Spanish agencies during these years were the organization of excursions, either by train, by bus or even by tourist vehicles; the sale of transport tickets (rail or ship, for example), the representation of other international agencies and the search for accommodation in hotels, houses or villas. As time went by, along with land travel by train, without a doubt, trips in motor vehicles, both family and collective (buses, regular or discretionary

lines) were gaining more and more importance. A recent study reveals that, for example, Spain surpassed Italy in terms of the number of motorized vehicles per capita in the 1920s (Vilar & Vallejo, 2018), when a National Circuit of Special Firms (1926) was also launched in the country, also called 'National Tourism Circuit' (Gil de Arriba, 2018; Vidal, 2018).

Finally, it must be said that Spanish travel agencies not only actively participated in the International Federation of Travel Agencies, but, as a result of their greater importance in the tourism sector and as a result of their good work, they won a relevant position in the Spanish tourism organization in training. This was officially recognized by the Government. Indeed, in 1932 the Federation of Travel Agencies of Spain was one of the entities represented in the General Tourism Council, an advisory body of the National Tourist Board, the state body responsible for promoting tourism. Other entities represented on the Council were transport companies, specifically, railway companies, navigation companies, road transport companies and the Spanish Shippers Association (Vallejo, 2018). This data is important because the Council served to institutionalize the relations between travel agencies and transport companies, so necessary for the development of tourism.

The years of business and expansion expectations (paradoxically)

This expansive cycle, from 1925 to 1929, can be described as a certain bubble of agencies. The bubble deflated because of the economic crisis that began at the end of 1929. That crisis caused the demise of companies in this area and perhaps serious difficulties for others, but in the 1930s, business expectations prevailed. There, albeit with ups and downs, we see an expansive bias in the intermediation of travelling, as shown in [Table 1](#) and [Figures 1, 2, and 4](#). Thus, the table of operators created in the 1920s was completed in the 1930s with several other agencies, including *Viajes Baleares* (1930), *Iberia* (1932), *SADIT* (Vigo, 1933), *Instituto Español de Turismo* (1933), *Carco* (1934), *Ruiz Vernacci* (1935) or *Urbis* (1935). Prior to the Civil War, the number of agencies existing in 1929 had been exceeded, as had their geographical extent and the quantity and quality of their products, which were now intended not only for wealthy minorities, but also, increasingly, for 'modest classes' ([Figures 5 and 6](#)).

This creation of travel agencies, amid critical years in several aspects, reveals that there were business expectations. An example is Vigo in 1933, not randomly, but in a year of international economic recovery. A group of businessmen from Vigo linked to tourism and ship consignment created *SADIT* with a share capital of 100,000 pesetas with the aim of entering into the cruise ship business that European agencies and shipping companies, especially British ones, were bringing to Spain and, in general, to the Spanish islands, North Africa and the Mediterranean, calling at several Spanish ports. In the Balearic Islands, we also have several examples of tourist agents being established in the 1930s, such as the following *Viajes Baleares*, *Viajes Iberia*, *Tourist Office Mallorca SA* (1932) or *Aero Taxi SL* (1933), among others (Cirer, 2009). However, perhaps the most striking example is the constitution of the Federation of Spanish Travel Agencies (FAVE). In 1925, the Spanish travel agencies formed their National Association and joined, with an active role, the International Federation of Travel Agencies, after which they formed associative-business conglomerates such as FAVE (in Barcelona in 1931), with eight associated agencies in 1932 ([Table 2](#)) (Vallejo, 2018). Some of its members formed a public limited company which could directly attract tourism in the European issuing markets. It was created in San Sebastián in 1933 as *Sociedad Anónima*

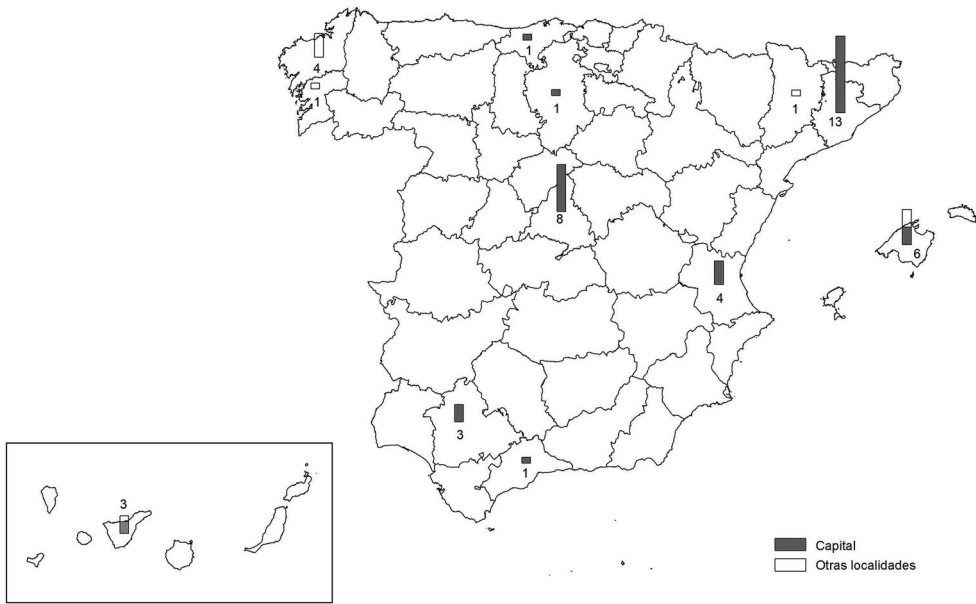


Figure 5. Travel agencies in 1929 and 1933.

Source: Estadística Administrativa de la CIC, 1929 y 1933 [Administrative Statistics of the ICC 1929 and 1933] and Vallejo (2018, pp. 124–125).

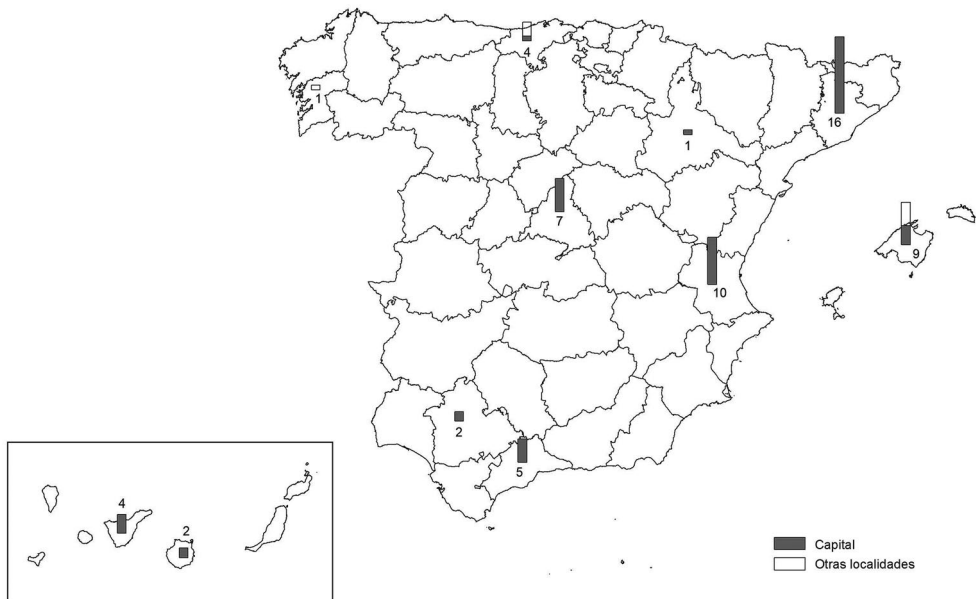


Figure 6. Travel agencies in 1929 and 1933.

Source: Estadística Administrativa de la CIC, 1929 y 1933 [Administrative Statistics of the ICC 1929 and 1933] and Vallejo (2018, pp. 124–125).

Table 2. Travel Agencies Federation, 1932.

City	Agency
Barcelona	<i>Viajes Internacional Express</i>
Barcelona	<i>Viajes Marsans, S. A.</i>
Barcelona	<i>Italia-América</i>
Barcelona	<i>Viajes Catalonia</i>
Madrid	<i>Carco, S. A.</i>
Málaga	<i>Viajes Bakumar</i>
San Sebastián	<i>Viajes Cafranga</i>
Valencia	<i>Valencia Express</i>

Source: La Época, 25-5-1932, p. 3.

Table 3. The twelve most representative travel agencies after the Spanish Civil War.

Denomination	Head office
Viajes Marsans, S.A.	Barcelona
Viajes Internacional Expreso	Barcelona
Viajes Cafranga	San Sebastián
Viajes Iberia, S.A.	Palma de Mallorca
Wagons-Lits/Cook	Madrid
Viajes Bakumar, S.A.	Málaga
Viajes Hispania	Alicante
J. Meliá y compañía	Valencia
Deutsche America Linie	Madrid
Agencia General de las Compañías Hamburguesas	Madrid
Viajes Sommariva, S.A.	Madrid
Viajes Vincit	Pamplona

Source: Fernández Fúster (1991).

de viajes FAVE, with a capital of 250,000 pesetas, to manage international tourism in Spain, Portugal and Morocco. This company set up its 'first office in Paris, in the premises of the P.N.T.' (Patronato Nacional del Turismo, National Tourist Board), to take advantage of 'the work of this entity for the propaganda carried out abroad'.²⁶ In 1935 it had its own stand at the 1st National Tourism Exhibition in Tarragona as *Viajes FAVE S.A.*, 'a national organization dedicated exclusively to promoting Spanish tourism'; it was made up of *Marsans*, *Cafranga*, *Iberia* and *Carco*.²⁷

Finally, another indicator of the relevance of this sector can be found in the organization in Spain of two other congresses of the International Federation of Travel Agencies in 1928 and 1934 (9th and 15th Congresses). The 1928 congress was particularly important because its aim was to raise awareness of Spain's potential as a tourist destination by taking advantage of the exhibitions in Seville and Barcelona. In fact, the delegates of the international agencies visited both cities and Madrid, analysing their infrastructures and tourist attractions for their potential clients, hoping to strengthen outbound tourism to Spain. The presidency of the congress was held by travel agent Eusebio Cafranga, who was fully satisfied by the commitment of all foreign participants to promote trips to Spain on the occasion of the aforementioned exhibitions.²⁸ At the same time, the celebration of the 15th IFTA Congress in Mallorca revealed that, beyond the political crisis experienced in October 1934 in various parts of the country, some Spanish provinces (and particularly the Balearic Islands) were already consolidating themselves as international tourist destinations, with tourism as a dynamic sector which was emerging in the economic structure of the islands.

Conclusion

Travel agencies emerged in Spain during the first third of the 20th century and multiplied and strengthened significantly from the second half of the 1920s and the first half of the 1930s. The Civil War weakened them, and some even disappeared amid economic difficulties or due to political persecution. However, the most important ones continued to operate during the struggle on *National Routes* of the Franco side, as well as in the immediate post-war period. In 1942 its regulation came about and the creation of a Consultative Commission, reorganized in 1948, in which the twelve most representative travel agencies participated, that had been created prior to 1936. Participating in this commission were both Spanish and foreign travel agencies (Wagons-Lits/Cook, Deutsche America Linie, Agencia General de las Compañías Hamburguesas y Viajes Sommariva, S.A.). For this they had to quickly position themselves in the Spanish market, even in some cases before the end of the Civil War, and comply with the requirements established in the Decree of February 19, 1942 that regulated the activity of travel agencies.

The activities of foreign travel agencies towards Spain and in Spain, and above all the birth and practices of Spanish travel agencies in the first third of the 20th century, formed part of the process of creating a Spanish tourism system, with its own operators before the Civil War, which laid the business foundations for tourism after the war and therefore for tourism in the 20th century (Vallejo & Larrinaga 2018b). The Civil War also caused fractures in tourism, which were aggravated by the outbreak in September 1939 of World War II and the impoverishment of the country until the 1950s. However, this did not prevent some continuity in the Spanish tourism system. By 1936, it had the infrastructure, equipment and services that had been created and accumulated during the first three decades of that century. There was also a network of tourism entrepreneurs who knew the business well, many of whom remained expectant of changes in the international environment and the improvement of the country's internal conditions and, consequently, of the travel possibilities of the Spaniards themselves. Travel agents were a special group among these entrepreneurs, having participated in the internationalization of tourism before World War II and being familiar with tourism as a global phenomenon. Consequently, travel agencies are essential for getting to know the Spanish tourism sector in the first third of the 20th century and for appreciating the progress of the country's nascent 'tourist industry'. And as well to understand the transition, in terms of tourism, from the years of the Republic through the Franco regime. A transition that, with nuances, can be defined more as continuity than rupture.

Notes

1. In another Index that we have compiled from the newspaper *La Vanguardia*, published in Barcelona since 1881, we find that the regular presence of travel agencies in the latter occurred from 1906 onwards.
2. As we have seen in the series we produced with the newspaper *La Vanguardia*.
3. *El Siglo Futuro*, 5-1-1905, p. 4 y *El Imparcial*, 6-1-1905, p. 4. For the Cook's travels to Algeciras, *ABC*, 28-6-1906, p. 6; y a Vigo, *ABC*, 5-3-1906, p. 11 y 16-4-1906, p. 12.
4. Participating in the product were the enterprises *Orleans, Midi, Norte de España, Madrid-Zaragoza-Alicante and Ferrocarriles Andaluces*. Archivo Municipal de Córdoba, Caja SF/C 04475.
5. *La Correspondencia de España*, 14-7-1914, p. 5. In 1908, the office of "Thos. Cook y Son, vapores y viajes" already appears in the *Anuario Riera*, 1908, p. 2495. Also Calvert (1912).

6. "Chausse-trappe... fin de siècle", *Revue Suisse des Hôtels*, 1893, 2.
7. *El Liberal*, 13-6-1908, p. 3. In 1909 the duo *El Liberal*-Sommariva were already in operation.
8. *El Viajero*, año IV, 37, mayo 1908 (advertisement page).
9. He was a member of the *Sociedad de Atracción de Forasteros de Barcelona* (SAFB), *Memoria correspondiente a 1909*, p. 26.
10. SAFB, *Memoria correspondiente a 1912*, p. 36.
11. Archivo Municipal de Córdoba, Caja SF/C 04475.
12. *La Época*, 2-10-1916, p. 3.
13. *Nuevo Mundo*, 7-11-1912, p. 7, 2-1-1913, p. 7 and 30-1-1913, p. 7.
14. *ABC*, 10-4-1908, pp. 17–18.
15. *Mundo gráfico*, 15-9-1920, p. 19.
16. *ABC*, 3-10-1926, p. 40 y 12-10-1926, p. 39.
17. *La Vanguardia*, 12-4-1923, p. 20.
18. *La Vanguardia*, 22-10-1925, p. 6, y 25-10-1925, p. 8.
19. In 1925, Sommariva participated in the *VI Congreso Internacional de las Agencias de Viajes*, the 6th International Congress of Travel Agencies amongst the Spanish, according to *El Heraldo de Madrid*, 30-10-1925, p. 5.
20. The years in brackets of the agencies correspond to their year of foundation, as in this case, or to the first year of which we are aware of their activity.
21. *La Vanguardia*, 29-6-1928, p. 2.
22. Barcelona, Valencia, Alicante, Málaga, Sevilla, Córdoba, Cádiz. *Viajes por España*, 12-1929, p. 8.
23. *Anuario de los Ferrocarriles Españoles*, 1927, p. 156.
24. *La Revista de viajes*, 7-1929, nº 23.
25. For a more in-depth view, see Vallejo and Larrinaga (2018a) and Larrinaga (2019).
26. *El Heraldo de Madrid*, 3-1-1933, p. 7.
27. *Barcelona Atracción*, 302, 1936/2, p. 249.
28. *La Época*, 29-10-1928, p. 1.

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