

# “SOCIAL” AND “CULTURAL”: A CASE OF SYNONYMY OR HYPONYMY IN THE FIELD OF TOURISM?

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## Abstract

*The current paper aims at analyzing specific terms which we have identified in tourism and at establishing the semantic relations that define these terms. We will focus on terminology from specialized texts, more specifically on terminological syntagmata including the two adjectives as determinants. “Social” and “cultural” are key determinants in sociological terminology, but they are also engaged in specialized syntagmata belonging to other fields such as tourism, arts, communication, journalism, etc. We will analyze their immediate context, the nature of the complex units, the way the forms occur in tourism texts and the way they are used in normative and descriptive sources, and the semantic consequences that they bring upon the field and semantics of tourism.*

**Keywords:** terminology, tourism, syntagmata

**JEL Classification:** Z30

## 1. Introduction

The field of tourism has experienced an increasing interest and development as far as both specialists (in Economics, in the tourism and travel industry, etc.) and non-specialists are concerned. This is basically why the terminology of tourism has been subjected to evolution, as well. The aim of the current paper is to identify syntagmata in tourism specific texts and contexts and analyze them so that a clear answer to the following questions: What is the linguistic relation of the adjectives “social” and “cultural”? What is the exact terminological status of the two adjectives in tourism?

## 2. Tourism and terminology – academic resources, connections, methodology

First of all, we have decided to look into the definition of the field to better understand it from a conceptual perspective. We have come across a wide variety of definitions of tourism, and we shall provide some examples, as follows:

- “the commercial organization and operation of holidays and visits to places of interest” (<https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/tourism>);
- “the business of providing services such as transport, places to stay, or entertainment for people who are on holiday” ([dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/tourism](https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/tourism));
- “the business of providing services for people on holiday, for example hotels, restaurants, and trips.” ([www.collinsdictionary.com/dictionary/english/tourism](https://www.collinsdictionary.com/dictionary/english/tourism));

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• “Tourism science is designed to provide a theoretical understanding of tourism. Tourism studies (as the applied study of tourism) are designed to enhance our ability to effectively manage the destination and, in doing so, enhance the well-being of the residents of a tourism destination.” (<https://journals.openedition.org/teoros/1621>).

Considering the high variation in the conceptual representation of the field under discussion, we have been forced into deciding upon one of these definitions as an indicator of semantic precision, stability and appropriateness. Starting from the scientific perspective of the current research, we shall take into consideration the fourth definition regarding “tourism science” all throughout this paper.

Terminology had its starting point as a mere branch of applied linguistics. Nevertheless, it has greatly developed over time as a consequence of “the simple human need to name and identify” (Sageder 2010: 123). Nowadays terminology can be perceived as: a useful resource for specialists in various fields of knowledge, a set of methodologies and procedures to be used while creating this resource, a communication factor, a community of actors in a specific field of knowledge, or, last but not least, an academic discipline that studies terms associated with various areas of specialist information (Bidu-Vranceanu et al 2005: 535; Valeontis 2006: 1; [www.computing.surrey.ac.uk/ai/pointer/report/section1.html](http://www.computing.surrey.ac.uk/ai/pointer/report/section1.html)).

It seems rather difficult to connect two dynamic fields of study (terminology and tourism) in order to retrieve correct information and draw accurate conclusions. This is why we will approach this topic from the clearly established perspective of descriptive terminology, which allows a proper identification and analysis of the terms in this domain as terminological units engaged in tourism-specific contexts. We are going to rely on the linguistic theoretical framework regarding semantic relations and further apply in onto the specialized syntagmata considered as real terminology<sup>1</sup> actively (and perhaps even dynamically) functioning in texts of tourism.

### 3. Terminological criteria and semantics

The nature of the connection between term and the concept that the term generates a series of felicitous/infelicitous semantic relations. Terminologically speaking, it is of great importance that the process of disambiguation regarding the specialized meaning of terms meet the criteria of precision, non-ambiguity, and monoreferentiality (according to Bidu-Vranceanu 2007: 33). These criteria differentiate terminological units from lexical units and are considered clear indicators for simple, compound, or even complex terms.

We have placed the following under the category of felicitous semantic relations: *antonymy*, *hyponymy*, *lexical and semantic fields*<sup>2</sup>. Even if antonymy is still debatable as far as its use, possible ambiguity, and the alleged primitiveness are concerned, once the exact criterion of the semantic opposition is clearly established and researched, it may generate disambiguity and even help while setting hyponymic relations in a clearly-stated terminology. Lexical and semantic fields help to further organize terms in a specific field.

On the other hand, we have labeled *polysemy*, *synonymy*, *paronymy*, and *homonymy* as infelicitous or rather inadvisable semantic relations in the case of terminological research. They are all sources of unspecificity and impreciseness, which

<sup>1</sup> Also see Thoiron & Bejoint 2003: 3-4 and Bidu-Vranceanu 2007: 148.

<sup>2</sup> Also see Bidu-Vranceanu 2007: 112-125.

do not belong to terminology as an academic discipline, a field of study or simply a reliable resource for specialists.

#### **4. Sources for terminological research**

As we have previously mentioned, the method we propose for our current research is a descriptive one, which allows us to synchronically study the terms, namely as they are actively and actually used nowadays in real texts of academic nature. The twelve texts have been issued starting 2014 until 2017 and further information (such as full title, authors, etc.) can be found in the category of references from the field of tourism at the end of the paper, in the order they have been read and their terms have been taken into account for the current analysis.

To get appropriate results, we have used Google search engine<sup>3</sup>, but we have also included certain criteria to refine the results. The first criterion which has been applied to the automatic text search is the nature of our sources, as they need to be tourism-based texts. Then there is the compulsory use of the two adjectives which function as key terms in this case, namely “social” and “cultural”. The third criterion refers to the recent publication years. The following criteria that have been implemented refer to the density of compound terms including the two adjectives stated above and to the academic nature of the text. These last stages have required special attention and thorough reading, as we have required dense terminological sources and we have been looking for the specific structure and information provided by specialized texts in the field of tourism.

#### **5. Tourism-specific compound terminology**

##### **5.1. Compound terms with the determinants “social” and “cultural”**

Compounds in tourism behave as syntagmata, in the sense that the constituents – the determinant and the determinatum – are clearly connected. In the case of this paper, the determinants to be analyzed are “social” and “cultural”, while the determinatum is provided by a wide range of possibilities, as the study of the specialized texts will show.

We shall begin with the definitions of the two key-words which are sometimes used interchangeably.

The definition of “social” is not to be found in DLTT, DTT or MDT. In DTTH we find syntagmas such as “social tourism” (DTTH 2003: 153, 171) or “social cost” (ibid. 153), but the adjective alone is not defined.

The other adjective, “cultural”, is defined as: “relating to the works of art produced by a particular nation or group of people or to their customs and traditional way of life” (DLTT 2006: 82). In DTTH we find syntagmas such as “cultural heritage”, “cultural relativism”, or “cultural tourism” (DTTH 2003: 48), but the adjective alone is not defined in DTTH, DTT or MDT.

Unfortunately, dictionaries of tourism do not provide much (semantic) information regarding these two words, but they do include syntagmata which are relevant to the field.

“Social” as an independent adjective is defined in general dictionaries as: “relating to society or its organization; needing companionship and therefore best suited to living in communities” (<https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/social>), “relating to

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<sup>3</sup> <https://www.google.com/>

activities in which you meet and spend time with other people and that happen during the time when you are not working; relating to society and living together in an organized way” (<https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/social>), “1: enjoying other people; sociable a *social* person. 2: relating to interaction with other people especially for pleasure a busy *social* life. 3: of or relating to human beings as a group” (<https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/social>).

General dictionaries define “cultural” as: “relating to the ideas, customs, and social behaviour of a society” (<https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/cultural>); “relating to the habits, traditions, and beliefs of a society” (<https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/cultural>); “of or relating to a particular group of people and their habits, beliefs, traditions, etc.” (<https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/cultural>).

The terms which have been retrieved from the twelve texts for this study are compound terms used in the scientific field of tourism which necessarily include the determinants “social” and “cultural”.

The results of the terminological study of the first series of twelve texts show that:

- there are over 150 compound terms which have been identified in the twelve texts;

- we have come across contextual liberty as far as the analyzed syntagms and simple terms are concerned (“social life” [2<sup>4</sup>], “social events” [3], “cultural activity” [3], “cultural issue” [10] for instance), but there are definitely rigorous terminological units, as well (“social prejudices” [5], “social revitalization” [7], “cultural resilience” [3], “heritagization” [6], “cultural adherence” [11], etc.);

- some texts are defined by high terminological density triggering “social”/“cultural” compounds: [1] – with 15 compound terms (12,30% of all compound terms), [3] – 28 compound terms (22,95%), [4] – over 22 compound terms (18,03%), [6] – over 14 compound terms (11,48%); this way, only two texts - [3] and [4] - include over 40% of all compound terms and all four texts represent 64,76% of the studied terminology, which includes 122 compound units – 49 units based on the first determinant plus 73 units including “cultural” as their determinant;

- there are fewer terms of the type “social”+noun (55) than “cultural”+noun terms (87);

- there are also cross syntagmas among these terms which highlight various instances of interdisciplinarity between tourism and:

- a. economics: “cultural and economic ties”[1], “economic and social benefit”[2], “social capital”, “cultural production”[3], “social fund”[5], “cultural economics”, “cultural supplies”[6];

- b. history: “cultural and historical processes”, “cultural and historical potential” [1], “cultural and historical identity” [3], “social anachronism” [12];

- c. sociology: “social media”, “social memory”, “social networks” [3], “social inclusion” [7], “social order” [11];

- d. psychology: “social psychology”, “social prejudices” [4];

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<sup>4</sup> This represents the number of the corresponding text, as marked in the tourism reference section, for example: [2] refers to Lussetyowati, T. 2015. Preservation and Conservation through Cultural Heritage Tourism. Case Study: Musi Riverside Palembang. In: Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences 184 (2015) 401 – 406.

e. anthropology: “cultural resilience”[3], “cultural traditionalism”[4], “cultural anthropology”[6];

f. management: “cultural ranking”, “social objectives” [4], “social organization” [12];

g. medicine: “social diagnose” [4], “social revitalization” [7];

h. common language: “cultural roads” [1], “social events”, “cultural work” [3], “cultural buildings” [5], “cultural issue” [10], “cultural aspects” [11];

- there are terms which occur only once in these texts (e.g. “cultural anachronism” [12]), but there are also highly frequent compounds including the determinant “cultural”: “cultural heritage” occurs several times in eight texts [1,2,4,5,6,7,9,10], “cultural tourism” can be identified in seven texts [1,2,4,5,6,7,10], “cultural resources” can be read in five texts [1,2,4,7,10], “cultural value” and “cultural events” occur in three sources [1,3,7]/[5,6,7], and the rest can be found in two sources, according to table 1;

- the form generates situations in which the same compound term can be identified with both singular and plural: e.g. “cultural difference” [7] and “cultural differences” [11];

- there are complex terms which combine the two determinants: “social and cultural activity” [3], “social and cultural groups”, “social and cultural objectives” [4], “social and cultural phenomena”, “social and cultural protection” [6], “social/cultural impacts”, “social/cultural environment”, “social/cultural impacts” [8], “social/cultural benefits” [9], which shall be further analyzed in the paper;

- there are six common determinatums which prove the conceptual connection between the two determinants which constitute the main topic of this research: “social benefit” [2] – “cultural benefit” [9], “social development” [3] – “cultural development” [1], “social interactions” – “cultural interaction” [4], “social indexes” [4] – “cultural index” [5], “social practices” [6] – “cultural practices” [3], “social work” [10] – “cultural work” [3]. We clearly perceive that two of these pairs of syntagms have a slight variation in number (interaction-interactions, indexes-index), but this is not semantically embedded and it generates no conceptual change. It is merely an issue of context and of author’s/ authors’ choice. “Interaction(s)” takes both determinants within the same text – text no. 4. Except for this instance, the source-texts for the syntagms which share the two adjectives are different, so texts cannot be subjectively considered the common ground or the source, the cause of these situations.

All these aspects have been captured, interpreted and then schematically presented in the following table:

**Table 1.** The compound terms identified in the specialized texts of tourism [1] – [12]

<b>COMOUND TERMS IDENTIFIED IN TEXTS [1] – [12]</b>	
<b>“SOCIAL” + NOUN</b>	<b>“CULTURAL” + NOUN</b>
<p><b>social</b> opportunities [1]; ~ life, (economic and) ~ benefit [2]; ~ events, ~ media, ~ formation, ~ memory, ~ capital, ~ networks, ~ development [3]; ~ positions, ~ conflict, ~ objectives, ~ tensions, ~ prejudices, ~ premises, ~ groups, ~ interactions, ~ indexes, ~ psychology, ~ capital, ~ actions, ~ impact, ~ diagnose [4]; ~ fund, ~ change [5]; ~ practices, ~ communities, ~ identity, ~ status, ~ theories, ~ reality, ~ standards [6]; ~ revitalization, ~ inclusion [7]; ~ exclusion, ~ progress [8]; ~ fabric, ~ carrying capacity [9], ~ ill, ~ work, ~ development [10]; ~ order, ~ etiquette [11]; ~ equality, ~ phenomenon, ~ anachronism, ~ integration, ~ organization [12]</p>	<p><b>cultural</b> corridors, ~ development, ~ phenomenon, ~ exchange, ~ (and economic) ties, ~ roads, ~ path, ~ (and historical) processes, ~ space, ~ basis, ~ monuments, ~ (and historical) potential, ~ festivals [1]; ~ assets [2]; ~ activity, ~ resilience, ~ practices, ~ functions, ~ remit, ~ production, ~ repertoires, ~ aspects, ~ work, ~ initiatives, ~ territory, ~ artifacts, ~ stakes, ~ traditions, ~ (and historical) identity, ~ transference, ~ knowledge, ~ material, ~ expression, ~ currents, ~ geographies [3]; ~ profile, ~ taxonomy, ~ representativeness, ~ shock, ~ similarity, ~ interaction, ~ traditionalism, ~ ranking, etc. [4], ~ buildings, ~ index [5]; ~ anthropology, ~ geography, ~ economics, ~ infrastructure, ~ supplies, ~ experience, ~ surprises, etc. [6]; ~ management, ~ experiences, ~ difference, ~ diversification, ~ monuments, etc. [7]; ~ preservation, ~ foundations, ~ benefit, ~ expressions, ~ elements, ~ taboo, ~ sites [9]; ~ boost, ~ issue [10]; ~ differences, ~ behavior, ~ adherence, ~ aspects [11]; ~ division, ~ significance [12]</p>
<p><b>social</b> science [3,6], ~ relationships [4,11], ~ systems [3,12], ~ structure [4,12], ~ life [2,12], ~ distance [4,12]</p>	<p><b>cultural</b> heritage [1,2,4,5,6,7,9,10], ~ resources [1,2,4,7,10], ~ tourism [1,2,4,5,6,7,10], ~ value [1,3,7], ~ events [5,6,7], ~ identity [1,4], ~ objectives [4,5], ~ sector [2,5], ~ goods [5,6], ~ consumption [6,7], ~ purpose [3,7], ~ festivals [6,10], ~ understanding [3,11], ~ conflict [4,11]</p>
<p><b>social and cultural</b> activity [3], ~ groups, ~ objectives [4], ~ phenomena, ~ protection [6]</p>	
<p><b>social/cultural</b> impact, ~ environment, ~ impacts [8], ~ benefits [9]</p>	

If we take a look at the recurring syntagmata, we notice that “social” and “cultural” do not overlap, that is they do not share any determinatum. While “social” takes “science”, “relationships”, “systems”, “structure”, “life”, and “distance” in forming these frequent syntagmas, the other adjective accepts the neighborhood of “heritage”, “resources”, “tourism”, “value”, “events”, “identity”, “objectives”, “sector”, “goods”, “consumption”,

“purpose”, “festivals”, “understanding”, and “conflict”. “Cultural” generates more and more frequent syntagmas in the texts that the current research relies on.

We can draw the conclusion that “social” generates expectable syntagmata, namely phrases which are often used in sociology. “Cultural” on the other hand forms interdisciplinary compounds, because of the determinatum which derives from anthropology (“cultural heritage”, “cultural identity”), economics (“cultural resources”, “cultural value”, “cultural sector”, “cultural goods”, “cultural consumption”), tourism (“cultural tourism”, “cultural festivals”), management (“cultural objectives”, “cultural purpose”), military (“cultural conflict”), and even common language (“cultural events”).

As it can be noticed in the table above, there are also various combinations of the two adjectives, which turn into complex terms with more than two constituents. There are two instances:

- “social and cultural”, which clearly indicates a mix of the semantic features (semes) of the two adjectives, although it is unclear which semes are incorporated in these terms;
- “social/cultural”, which requires and engages readers’ capacity of choosing between the two determinants, as if they were synonyms or at least used interchangeably within the provided context(s).

## **5.2. Compound terms with determinants representing different combinations of the adjectives “social” and “cultural”**

Starting from the ambiguity and heterogeneity of the pragmatic status and contextual use of the two terms, “social” and “cultural”, which share certain determinatums and which are sometimes used interchangeably without being possibly considered synonyms, we need to study the semantic consequences of this different conceptualization. Their status is sometimes interpreted as “either...or...” (in the form of “/”), which automatically appeals to people’s choice regardless of their specialization and knowledge, and some other times as co-occurrence (marked by a conjunction - “and”).

Taking into consideration the terminological data from texts [11] – [14] which include combined forms of “social” and “cultural” we have found the following results:

**Table 2.** The compound and complex terms identified in the specialized texts of tourism [11] – [14]

COMPOUND AND COMPLEX TERMS IN TEXTS [11] – [14]			
“SOCIOCULTURAL” + NOUN	“SOCIO-CULTURAL” + NOUN	“SOCIAL-CULTURAL” + NOUN	“SOCIAL AND CULTURAL” + NOUN
<b>sociocultural</b> phenomenon, ~ value, ~ nature, ~ experience, ~ planning, ~ environment, standards [13]	<b>socio-cultural</b> impact(s), ~ and economic impacts, ~ aspects, ~ perspectives [11];  <b>socio-cultural</b> expanse, ~ environment, ~ heritage, ~ component, ~ phenomenon, ~ context [12];  <b>socio-cultural</b> characteristic, ~ potential, ~ environment, ~ planning, ~ project, ~ dialogue, ~ potential, ~ need, ~ situation, ~ functions, ~ information exchange [13]  <b>socio-cultural</b> impact(s), ~ effects, ~ sphere(s), ~ tourism impacts, ~ harm, ~ structure(s), ~ impact items, ~ dimension, ~ costs [14]	<b>social-cultural</b> and economic impacts, <b>social-cultural</b> cost [11]	<b>social and cultural</b> aspects, ~ impact [11];  <b>social and cultural</b> traditions [12]  <b>social and cultural</b> needs, ~ policy [13]

Even though there is a total of only 31 terms, we may draw certain terminological conclusions regarding tourism-specific texts. It is obvious that the form “socio-cultural” is prolific, thus rendering most syntagmata in the entire list of possible forms (17 syntagms, which represent almost 55% of all syntagms). The fact that this hyphenated compound can be encountered in all four texts which have been subjected to this study proves that “socio-cultural” is objectively the preferred adjective form of these authors. At the opposite extreme, “social-cultural” generates only 2 syntagms, one of which is a complex term including actually three determinants (“social-cultural and economic impacts”).

Dictionaries mention “socio-cultural” and “sociocultural” are synonyms<sup>5</sup>. The third form, “social-cultural” is not defined in general dictionaries, but it is encountered in many specialized texts pertaining to sociology, history, anthropology, and the list may go on. “Social and cultural” are defined as separate units, yet are not recognized as a fixed

<sup>5</sup> Also see <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/sociocultural>.



syntagm in the dictionaries. It is clear that terminology in its usage is sometimes more powerful despite the lack of term entry in the dictionaries. These terms exist and are used not only in common language texts, but also in specialized texts, such as these fourteen tourism-based examples.

## 6. Conclusions

There are variations in the definition of tourism, but its definition as a field of science, and the social reality within higher education support its existence and even its development. There is a clear interrelation with other domains, as in the case of all weak terminologies. They refer to economics basically, but also to management, culture, history, anthropology, sociology, psychology, and, terminologically speaking, we are also interested in the interrelation with the common language. There seems to be a wide interest in tourism from specialists in other fields and laypersons altogether and there is a so-called approachability for a wide audience that makes tourism desirable and interesting. Besides, there are two terminological trends which appear in knowledge dissemination: the democratization and popularization of knowledge, which create a strong relation between scientists or specialists and laypersons or people who are specialized in totally different fields of science.

There is a wide range of linguistic resources regarding this domain. There is a number of prescriptive sources to take into account; we have relied on four specialized dictionaries and three general dictionaries. Nevertheless we cannot leave aside the descriptive sources, namely the texts, which sometimes provide a richer terminology than dictionaries. There are texts to illustrate all specialization levels: specialized, didactic and informative texts. We have only chosen specialized texts for the current study.

The syntagmata using the determinants *cultural and social*, which are pivot terms of tourism specialized texts, do not always meet the criteria of terms. Some syntagmas are specialized units, some are cross-terms used in several related areas, but there are also cases when they are used as linguistic units in texts.

Both the democratization and popularization of knowledge have a strong impact upon these tourism-specific syntagmas, but the strength of the terminological unit provides the future status and stability within the field for the term.

“Social” and “cultural” are semantically connected, but their semantic features simply overlap in some areas and particular contexts. Tourism has developed a strong interdependence with certain fields of science and it sometimes borrows terminology from sociology and culture, alongside other social sciences. There is no real synonymy and no real hypernymy to be found in all or most syntagmata that occurs in these 14 texts that we have analyzed.

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