

The Historical Journal, 64, 5 (2021), pp. 1379–1402 © The Author(s), 2021. Published by Cambridge University Press. This is an Open Access article, distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution licence (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>), which permits unrestricted re-use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original work is properly cited.
doi:10.1017/S0018246X21000030

AUTOMOBILES AND TOURISM AS INDICATORS OF DEVELOPMENT IN SPAIN, 1918–1939*

MARGARITA VILAR-RODRÍGUEZ 

Universidade da Coruña

AND

RAFAEL VALLEJO-POUSADA 

Universidade de Vigo

ABSTRACT. *The development of motor vehicles and their mass production and consumption during the first decades of the twentieth century had significant economic and social effects. The developed Atlantic countries, world leaders in vehicle production, were the protagonists of the success of the car. However, the globalization brought about by the second industrial revolution drew in other countries on the periphery, thanks to transport technologies, telecommunications, and the media. Thus, the consumption patterns and lifestyles of the ‘centres’ and the ‘peripheries’ tended to become more uniform, especially among the urban population. This included an interest in travelling and leisure activities in general. The link between the use of motor vehicles and new tourism practices in Spain between 1918 and 1939 provides an excellent viewpoint from which both to analyse the country’s economic and social transformation during this period and to relativize the degree of backwardness observed in Spain in other studies. In this respect, we provide evidence which shows that, despite being a country of the so-called European periphery, Spain had similar patterns of consumption of durable consumer goods, such as the motor vehicle, as other, more advanced countries. There is therefore room to reconsider what has been termed ‘Spanish backwardness’.*

Universidade da Coruña, Campus de Elviña, s/n, 15071 A Coruña, Spain mvilar@udc.es

Universidade de Vigo, Campus de As Lagoas s/n, 36310 Vigo, Spain vallejo@uvigo.es

* This research was funded by Xunta de Galicia (ref. ED431B 2019/34). We also want to thank the editors and three anonymous reviewers for their valuable feedback on the final versions of the article.

Transport and tourism are two sectors characterized by a profound and complex historical relationship. In general, the traditional historiography relates technological progress in transport to changes in tourism habits.¹ Thus, while rail transport is frequently linked to the first modern forms of tourism, the spread of the motor vehicle is related to the possibility of new tourism practices, the extension of tourism areas, and the segmentation of the tourism market.² Above all, the motor car added freedom and independence to the tourism experience and led to new destinations that had not existed before or that were previously unimaginable. From this perspective, there are outstanding contributions to the historiography of tourism on the relationship between tourism and the motor vehicle or in reference to the diffusion of the private car among families.³

One of the most novel contributions in this area of research in recent years is Gijs Mom's *Atlantic automobilism*.⁴ Mom maintains that the history of mobility is a key element in uniting the experience of movement with the medium that enables it and does not just represent a way of investigating how people move and goods circulate but also a way of thinking about human societies.⁵ Hence he eschews the basic thesis within the historiography that traditionally divides the evolution of the car into two stages through the 'toy-to-tool myth', and points out that any study of the tourism–motor vehicle relationship cannot disregard the development of transport (and the necessary infrastructures

¹ A detailed bibliography on tourism and transport, from 1939 to 1954, can be found in W. Hunziker, 'Tourisme et transports', *Tourist Review*, 10 (1955), pp. 14–23. Other authors analyse the numerous points of intersection between the history of transport and tourism and, in so doing, highlight the relationship between experience, infrastructure, consumption, and production: see, for example, Shelley Baranowsky, 'Common ground: linking transport and tourism history', *Journal of Transport History*, 28 (2007), pp. 120–4.

² The growing influence of motor transport in many countries around the world from the 1920s onwards reduced the primacy of railways: see Theodore C. Barker, 'The international history of motor transport', *Journal of Contemporary History*, 20 (1985), pp. 3–19. Other authors have emphasized the idea that transport has been one of the key elements in the development of tourism since the industrial revolution: see Beata Gierczak, 'The history of tourist transport after the modern industrial revolution', *Polish Journal of Sport and Tourism*, 18 (2011), pp. 275–81.

³ For the impact of the automobile on tourism habits, see, for example, Michael V. Conlin and Lee Jolliffe, *Automobile heritage and tourism* (New York, NY, 2017); Eric Zuelow, *A history of modern tourism* (Basingstoke, 2015); Thomas Weiss, 'Tourism in America before World War II', *Journal of Economic History*, 64 (2004), pp. 289–327. For the impact of the diffusion of the motor car on lifestyles, see Sean O'Connell, *The car in British society: class, gender and motoring, 1896–1939* (Manchester, 1998); David Thomas, Len Holden, and Tim Claydon, eds., *The motor car and popular culture in the twentieth century* (Aldershot, 1998); Susan Strasser, Charles McGovern, and Matthias Judd, eds., *Getting and spending: European and American consumer societies in the twentieth century* (Washington, DC, 1998); Louis J. K. Setright, *Drive on! A social history of the motor car* (London, 2003); Daniel Miller, ed., *Car cultures* (Oxford, 2001), among others.

⁴ Gijs Mom, *Atlantic automobilism: emergence and persistence of the car, 1895–1940* (New York, NY, 2015).

⁵ A similar thesis is also upheld in a recent publication, Massimo Moraglio, 'Seeking a (new) ontology for transport history', *Journal of Transport History*, 39 (2017), pp. 3–10.

and services), or the sociological changes and the associated cultural dimension.⁶ Overall, the study of the history of tourist transport enables us to incorporate new elements into the analysis of the long-term evolution of societies, their economies, and their distribution and consumption patterns.⁷

Mom argues that the analysis of road-traffic motorization in the early twentieth century makes it possible to talk about an Atlantic mobility culture as part of the Western modernization of society.⁸ This was a continuous process rather than a revolutionary change and can be better seen from the perspective of user behaviour as a starting point than from the quantitative and technological development of their vehicles. Thus, the development of the motor vehicle should be studied as an inseparable part of the system, as it became the 'backbone of a consumption-driven society': that is, as a vehicle of modernity. Consequently, the speed and the geographical extension of the propagation of the automobile in the developed countries of the north Atlantic during the interwar years is an indicator of the success or failure of the middle classes in establishing themselves as the crucial social power.

Gijs Mom's approach connects with the foundations of the development economy from the 1950s to the 1970s. In particular, for some defenders of the consumer society, such as George Katona and Walt Rostow, mass consumption and the consumer society are a consequence of the degree of development reached by certain societies.⁹ Thus, among other aspects, this path of development leads to mass consumption of durable goods and services by increasingly broad segments of society. According to Rostow's analysis, this stage was reached by countries such as the United States, Canada, and the UK before the Second World War.¹⁰ Its zenith was attained in the United States with the

⁶ For Mom, the 'toy-to-tool myth', which explains the success of the car based on its (seemingly new) utilitarian properties, was in fact a marketing tool of proponents of the car, a way to sell the car as a 'necessity' at the societal level, and an alibi for indulging in the fun of driving: Mom, *Atlantic automobilism*, p. 639.

⁷ In other words, the cultural ingredient must go further and act as an accompaniment, and not as a substitute, in any history of tourism or transport, along the lines also argued by John Walton, 'Transport, travel, tourism and mobility: a cultural turn?', *Journal of Transport History*, 27 (2006), pp. 129–34.

⁸ Mom, *Atlantic automobilism*, pp. 241–2.

⁹ Walt W. Rostow, *Las etapas del crecimiento económico. Un manifiesto no-comunista* (Mexico, 1974; orig. edn 1960); George Katona, *The mass consumption society* (New York, NY, 1964). From a critical perspective, authors such as John Galbraith consider the most appropriate term to be 'affluent society' or 'society of abundance'. The affluent society, according to Galbraith, would be a superfluous society, encouraging appearances and inciting ineffable and antisocial desires: see John K. Galbraith, *The affluent society* (New York, NY, 1998, orig. edn 1958). In a more recent work, Jeremy Rifkin presents a critical reflection on the theories of mass consumption and concludes that the phenomenon of mass consumption did not occur spontaneously but rather was driven by production linked to consumption and creating the figure of the 'unsatisfied consumer' via marketing. For Rifkin, the automobile market in the United States in the 1920s would be a clear example of this process. See Jeremy Rifkin, *El fin del trabajo* (Barcelona, 2003; orig. edn 1995), pp. 41–7.

¹⁰ Rostow, *Las etapas del crecimiento económico*, p. 23.

introduction of the cheap mass production of automobiles, which had a revolutionary impact, both socially and economically. One of the effects that should be highlighted was the conversion of the United States into the leading country in outbound tourism in the 1920s and 1930s, along with the UK, while Canada became one of the world leaders in inbound tourism.¹¹ In particular, in some of the Canadian provinces (such as British Columbia), the incorporation of tourism into their development became a real political commitment. Hence, tourism became a key element in the country's particular path of national construction.¹²

Mom notes that most of the studies available on the history of automobilism as part of the economic development of countries have focused on the developed countries of the north Atlantic.¹³ He adds that new research on the countries of the southern European periphery, of 'later motorization', would greatly enrich this approach. This is precisely the aim of this article, focusing on the case of Spain, a country with a slower pace of industrialization than the north Atlantic leaders.¹⁴ Nevertheless, before the Spanish Civil War (1936–9), the country had already created a sufficiently solid base for tourism, in terms of both supply and demand.¹⁵ Consequently, the link between the use of motor vehicles and new tourism practices in Spain between 1918 and 1939 provides an excellent viewpoint from which both to analyse the country's economic and social transformation during this period and to relativize the degree of backwardness observed in Spain in other studies. In this respect, it should be remembered that, from the beginning of the twentieth century, tourism became a key activity in the production structure of this country.

Starting from this context, this article aims to show that Spain joined the consumption of automobiles from the very start of the industry. It did so, however, more as a consumer than as a producer of vehicles, unlike Italy.¹⁶ After the First

¹¹ For the ranking in 1929–35, see League of Nations, *Bulletin Mensuel de Statistique*, 17 (1936), p. 548.

¹² As explained by, among others, Michael Dawson, *Selling British Columbia: tourism and consumer culture, 1890–1970* (Vancouver, 2005). On the important role that tourism played in fostering a shared sense of American identity in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, see also Marguerite S. Shaffer, *See America first: tourism and national identity, 1880–1940* (Washington, DC, 2001).

¹³ Mom, *Atlantic automobilism*, p. 653.

¹⁴ The recent social historiography defends the thesis that a reformulation of the so-called 'Spanish backwardness' is necessary. The point is that different nation-states have taken different forms and developed in different ways for particular reasons, and it is this that requires analysis. See Mónica Burguera and Christopher Schmidt-Nowara, 'Backwardness and its discontents', *Social History*, 29 (2004), pp. 279–83.

¹⁵ See the works included in Rafael Vallejo and Carlos Larrinaga, eds., *Los orígenes del turismo moderno en España. El nacimiento de un país turístico 1900–1939* (Madrid, 2018).

¹⁶ Spain was ahead of Italy in terms of consumption per inhabitant during the 1920s and 1930s: see Margarita Vilar and Rafael Vallejo, 'El automóvil y el turismo en España, 1900–1936', in Carlos Barciela and G. Luigi Fontana, eds., *La industria del automóvil de España e Italia en perspectiva histórica* (Alicante, 2018), pp. 389–431. In 1933, vehicles produced

World War, Spain experienced the spread of mass consumer society practices related to motor vehicles: car dealership chains, purchases on credit and in instalments, advertising campaigns, and so forth. The appearance and spread of motor vehicles substantially changed mobility patterns, the scale of markets, criteria for the location of factories, and relations between producers and consumers. Furthermore, it modified the distribution of the population and homes within the country, from the rural world to urban centres, and also undoubtedly revolutionized travel habits and the tourism industry. Motor vehicles, private and collective, became a prime means of tourist mobility during the period under analysis, and had similar economic and social effects (although to a different extent) as in other leading countries. One of these was to socially extend tourism, making it more popular.

In this article, we provide evidence which shows that, despite Spain being a country of the so-called European periphery, the motor vehicle played a significant role in the 'Western modernization' of its society in line with the thesis defended by Mom. Spain was not as different as is often presumed. There is therefore, in this aspect too, room to reconsider what has been termed 'Spanish backwardness'.

I

The industrial diffusion of the motor vehicle had some significant macroeconomic effects before 1939 (on regional and national income, employment, exports, and productivity gains). Simultaneously, there was a whole range of microeconomic impacts, ranging from those on families to the creation of hundreds of goods and services companies for the growing fleet of vehicles in both developed and developing countries. Motor vehicles introduced economic and social changes and were influenced in turn by those changes.¹⁷ They were present in many facets of life in developed countries, from industrial structures to daily life, including transport infrastructure, urban planning, architecture, factories, press and radio advertising, and, not least, travel and tourism.¹⁸ They became essential for lifestyles and for the dominant model of development—so much so, that a General Motors magazine published in Spain in 1929 commented:

internally in Spain barely accounted for 2 per cent of consumption, while Italy almost exclusively consumed nationally produced vehicles (98 per cent of the total): see Marcel Ehrmann, *L'automobile de tourisme en France* (Bordeaux, 1938), pp. 331–3.

¹⁷ The mass use of motor vehicles also has negative aspects, related to their impact on accidents, pollution, the geographical distribution of the population, and the use of public land. An interesting reflection on the benefits and costs of the use of motor vehicles can be found in Peter Freund and George Martin, *The ecology of the automobile* (Montreal, 1993).

¹⁸ André Trimbach, *Le tourisme international* (Paris, 1938), p. 119.

If we imagined for a moment the contemporary world without automobiles, wouldn't we experience one of the strangest sensations? How long could we get by without them? Imagine what disruption our current lifestyle would experience. The automobile is no longer only an instrument of luxury and pleasure, it is inherent to our current life and the most powerful aid to our existence.¹⁹

Ahead of the UK and Germany, France led world production and exports of the new means of transport when the twentieth century began. However, the factor endowment, the size of its market, and innovations in the organization of production, distribution, and sales phases soon enabled the United States and its automobile industry to reach an unassailable position. By 1913, the US already manufactured 79 per cent of the vehicles that were developed by the six leading producer countries. In 1928, when US production exceeded 4.5 million cars, nearly ten times more than in 1913, that world share rose to 85 per cent. Before the crisis of 1929, the automotive industry belonged to North America, as Canada had climbed to second place in the international ranking (Table 1).

Within this context, the case of Spain allows us to observe a key element: in order to experience these incipient processes, it was not necessary to be a leading country in motor vehicle production. What is more, Spain was a very long way behind the main world automobile producers. It only produced 325 vehicles in 1928, a figure that placed this country in fifteenth position in the world ranking.²⁰ During this period, the production capacity of the main Spanish factories, such as the Hispano-Suiza one located in Barcelona, was constantly underutilized. Thus, instead of gearing itself towards mass production, the industry continued to opt exclusively for a luxury good, at a time when other trends could already be seen in the leading countries. The size of the domestic market, quite modest in the Spanish case, was one of the underlying causes. Another was the existence of a variety of small companies, which moreover produced several models; this obviously prevented the large-scale production that would lower prices. In 1929, the automobile entrepreneur André Citroën was of the opinion that businessmen in a country would only be in a position to produce cars with 'sales prices that can compete with foreigners' when that country reached the threshold of an annual consumption of 20,000 vehicles, and, even then, with difficulty. According to Citroën, Spain and Sweden were among the countries where 'they could manufacture cars, find materials, recruit personnel and train the (technical) personnel' for this, but as the former 'does not have more than 130,000 cars and the latter 108,000, there is no doubt that the production of 20,000 cars mentioned above, apportioned

¹⁹ *Revista de la General Motors Peninsular*, March 1929, p. 2.

²⁰ Jordi Catalan, 'La creación de la ventaja comparativa en la industria automovilística española, 1898–1996', *Revista de Historia Industrial*, 18 (2000), pp. 113–56, at p. 115.

Table 1 *Vehicle production in the six leading countries (and Spain), 1900–28*

	1900	1907	1913	1924	1928
United States	4,000	45,000	485,000	3,504,000	4,538,759
Canada	-	-	18,000	135,000	242,382
United Kingdom	175	12,000	34,000	147,000	211,877
France	4,800	25,000	45,000	145,000	210,000
Germany	800	4,000	23,000	49,000	89,950
Italy	-	2,500	8,000	50,000	55,010
Total	9,775	88,500	613,000	4,030,000	5,347,978
Spain	-	-	-	-	325

Sources: Simon P. Ville, *Transport and development of the European economy, 1750–1918* (London, 1990), p. 180. For 1928, see Catalán, ‘La creación de la ventaja comparativa’, p. 115.

among several industrialists and various models, would be difficult to achieve'.²¹

Importance in terms of production was reflected almost directly in the ranking of consumers, although with some exceptions such as Spain, which was a notable consumer but a rather insignificant producer (Table 2). In 1913, the United States and Canada, followed by the United Kingdom, led the world ranking of vehicles per capita. The figures for 1921 and 1932 show that their motorization was already extraordinary, and it further accelerated over the course of the 1920s and '30s: in the United States there was one car for every 11 people in 1921 and one for every 6 in 1932. Canada experienced a similar progression, since in 1921 there was one car for every 21 people but by 1932 this had risen to one car for every 10 people.²² Vehicle use was now democratized in these countries. While in France the '*vulgarisation de ce nouveau mode de transport*' was taking place in the interwar period, the case in the UK was that 'the middle classes take to the road': in 1921, there was one private car for every 164 people in France and one for every 114 in the United Kingdom, ratios that had reached one vehicle per 33 and 44 inhabitants, respectively, by 1932. As M. L. Monginet observed in 1933, 'the prodigious development of the automobile industry in all countries of the world has only taken approximately a dozen years. Formerly, luxury vehicles were reserved for a few privileged rich; nowadays, the automobile is available to all social classes.'²³

Despite the relative backwardness of the Spanish automotive industry in this period, the country had already joined the process of mass consumption of this item, at levels similar to other countries that were more advanced in terms of per capita income (Table 3). This growing domestic demand was mainly met with imported vehicles, to the extent that, in 1931, for example, the consumption of vehicles of national production did not even reach 2 per cent of total consumption.²⁴ Spain, therefore, was a consumer but not a producer of vehicles during the first decades of the twentieth century. Patterns of consumption were similar to those described for the leading countries. The advance was most spectacular after the First World War, when a kind of euphoria of consumption and use of motor cars can be observed, which can partly be explained by the extraordinary profits generated in the short and medium term by Spain's neutrality in this war. During the 1920s and 1930s, Spain was among the top ten countries when ranked by the number of vehicles per 1,000 inhabitants.

²¹ 'La producción de automóviles vista y comentada por el célebre constructor europeo Mr. Citroën', *Kinos. Automovilismo, Aeronáutica-Turismo*, 10 (May 1929), p. 154.

²² See Vilar and Vallejo, 'El automóvil y el turismo', p. 392.

²³ M. L. Monginet, *Action collective en faveur du tourisme étranger en France* (Bordeaux, 1933), p. 69; Coventry Transport Museum, *Your journey starts here* (guide book) (Coventry, 2015), p. 15.

²⁴ As seen in José Luis Hernández Marco, 'La oferta automovilística en España antes del Seat 600, 1906–1957', *Economía Industrial*, 307 (1996), pp. 131–48; and Catalan, 'La creación de la ventaja comparativa', p. 115.

Table 2 *Motor vehicles registered in the six leading producer countries (and Spain), 1907–32^a*

	1907	1913	1920–1	1932
United States	143,200	1,258,000	9,240,000	21,090,726
France	40,000	125,000	236,400	1,251,538
United Kingdom	63,500	250,000	363,000	1,052,125
Canada	2,100	50,600	408,800	1,025,124
Germany	16,200	70,600	90,900	497,275
Italy	6,100	17,000	49,500	236,553
Total	271,100	1,771,200	10,388,600	25,153,341
Spain	1,138	8,741	41,218	288,680

^a These figures refer to private vehicles. The Spanish data include the vehicles registered (cumulatively) in each year from 1906. The figures for Spain also include motorcycles, which accounted for around 7 per cent of the total number of vehicles registered, according to José Luis Hernández Marco, ‘La oferta automovilística en España antes del Seat 600: 1906–1957’, *Economía Industrial*, 307 (1996), pp. 131–48.

Source: Ville, *Transport*, p. 192. Data for vehicles registered in Spain from ‘Primeros vehículos matriculados en España’, Archivo del Ministerio del Interior, Madrid, Dirección General de Tráfico.

Table 3 *Vehicles in use per 1,000 people, 1914–30*

Country	1914	1922	1930
USA	17.3	111.2	215.5
France	2.7	9.2	36.6
United Kingdom	5.8	12.3	32.8
Sweden	0.5	6.6	23.6
Belgium	1.3	4.2	19.6
Switzerland	1.6	5.4	18.8
Holland	0.7	2.6	14.2
Germany	0.9	2.0	10.1
Spain	0.4	1.7	8.1
Italy	0.7	1.7	5.9

Source: José L. Hernández Marco, 'Was it different in Spain? Automobile diffusion before Spanish Civil War', n.d., https://www.academia.edu/32718665/Was_it_different_in_Spain_Automobile_diffusion_before_the_Spanish_Civil_War.

There were several reasons for the popularization of the motor car in the leading producer countries up to 1939. The productivity gain derived from large-scale production was, of course, one of them, along with the introduction of assembly lines and the spread of mass distribution techniques, which, as Alfred D. Chandler explained, were not available for all industries and were not equally important in all of them.²⁵ Assembly-line production quickly increased productivity in factories and reduced prices, which facilitated the social diffusion of cars. A Ford Model T cost \$825 in 1908; only eight years later, in 1916, this had dropped to \$345. As prices continued to fall in the following years, there was an explosion in demand stimulated by marketing techniques such as consumer credits, instalment sales, and the creation of a notable second-hand market. Competition between companies led them to adopt progressive changes in their strategic models, and wage levels also contributed to this explosion. In the 1920s and particularly the 1930s, spurred by the international crisis, companies tended to manufacture smaller cars – known in the UK as 'baby' cars – which were accessible to more people. In the US, the relationship between a worker's wage and the price of a car was more advantageous than in other countries. According to Citroën, the price of a car in 1929 was equivalent to 60 days' work in the US, while in France it corresponded to 300–400 days.²⁶

²⁵ Alfred D. Chandler, *The visible hand: the managerial revolution in American business* (Cambridge, MA, 1977).

²⁶ 'La producción de automóviles vista y comentada por el célebre constructor europeo Mr. Citroën', *Kinos. Automovilismo, Aeronáutica-Turismo*, 11 (June 1929), p. 173.

After the First World War, European companies were aware of these differences. Taking into account US multinational expansion (which included the installation of assembly factories and the absorption of local companies), they chose to manufacture competitive models by reducing their prices. Each country responded differently. In France, from 1919, Citroën launched the first European vehicle aimed at the mass market, the Type A Torpedo, which was followed by, among others, the C6 (1929), the Citroën Rosalie (1932), and the 7CV (1934). The UK made a start in this race with the small Austin 7 (1921–37), followed by its rival, the Morris Minor (1929), restyled in 1931 and the first car to cost as little as £100. This and other models such as the Austin 7 Tourer, which sold for £125–£140 and had female drivers among its target customers, made vehicles available to thousands of families. During the 1930s, the number of private cars in the UK doubled from one to two million on the eve of the Second World War, and licences for private vehicles, including motorcycles, rose from 1.76 million in 1930 to 2.40 million in 1938.²⁷

We can see similar processes in Germany and Italy. In the former, Opel launched the 4/12 PS Laubfrosch model in 1924 and the P-4 in 1934–5, while BMW began producing vehicles in 1927 with the BMW-Dixi, and DKW made its debut in 1928 with the Typ P. These initiatives were the basis for mass motorization in Germany, which was considered strategic to the Third Reich's economic recovery before 1935. Such mass consumption was also pursued in Italy, culminating in 1935 when Fiat marketed its famous Topolino model. This commitment to creating a mass consumption society in Germany and Italy led to great progress being made, with the relatively low ratios of 1.43 and 1.30 cars per 1,000 people, respectively, in 1921, rising considerably to 7.57 and 5.61 cars per 1,000 people in 1932, in line with the figures observed for the United States, Canada, and the United Kingdom.²⁸ In a somewhat more modest position, Spain also experienced this extraordinary motorization. According to official figures, in 1922 there were 1.7 cars per 1,000 people, a ratio that rose to 8.1 in 1930 (Table 3). These data show that the relative position of Spain was better than that of other countries in the European periphery such as Italy.

As well as other durable consumer goods that were arriving in stores (refrigerators, electric irons and cookers, vacuum cleaners, etc.), thousands of families in the most developed economies started buying cars in the 1920s and 1930s (in fact, these were already millions in the United States, France, Canada, and the United Kingdom). Thus, a significant part of the family income was absorbed by the cost of purchasing and maintaining motor vehicles.²⁹ The change in the patterns of consumption of durable goods in Spain was less

²⁷ Coventry Transport Museum, *Your journey starts here*, p. 15; David Butler and Anne Sloman, *British political facts, 1900–1979* (London, 1980), p. 317.

²⁸ See Vilar and Vallejo, 'El automóvil y el turismo', p. 392.

²⁹ Ehrmann, *L'automobile de tourisme en France*, p. 14.

intense than in the more developed countries, but the trends were similar. In 1926, for example, the company Puig y Cía. de Barcelona offered ‘Totally automatic electric refrigeration units, of the Frigidaire brand, suitable for domestic and commercial use’. This market expanded in the 1930s with brands such as Baker, Remington, Electrolux, and Norge, which sold ‘refrigeration chambers, electric washing machines, air conditioners, electric cookers’.³⁰ At the same time, ‘two-year’ hire-purchase agreements appeared for radio sets made by Bremer-Tully, Philips, Telefunken, Clarion, Crosley, and Punto Azul, among others.³¹

The data available on the pattern of consumption of Spanish families, although statistically fragile, show that the country underwent a certain modernization between 1900 and 1936: the weight of ‘foodstuffs’ fell by 6 per cent, while the following items all increased: ‘clothing and footwear’, ‘housing and household expenditure’ (which included durable consumer goods), and ‘other expenses’ (including leisure). The real per capita consumption of Spaniards in 1935 was 42 per cent greater than in 1900.³² Just as, from the 1920s, there was an ‘irruption of modernity’ in the Spanish urban fabric, ‘mass society’ emerged and the most visible expression of this ‘great transformation experienced by urban society’ was the combination of electricity, the telephone, the cinematograph, the press, the radio, advertising, sport, fashion, the motor car, and tourism.³³ Although only 42 per cent of the population lived in municipalities of more than 10,000 inhabitants in 1930, the large cities of more than 100,000 inhabitants became increasingly prominent and led the way in establishing the dynamics of Spanish society between the First World War and the Spanish Civil War. This sociological mutation – in which the urban middle classes participated, even though their power and influence were far lower than those of their counterparts in the leading countries – ran parallel to the convergence of per capita income with developed Europe during the interwar period.³⁴

³⁰ *La Vanguardia*, 24 Apr. 1926, p. 27; 25 Feb. 1934, p. 32; 14 Mar. 1934, p. 35; 30 Apr. 1935, p. 4; 30 Jun. 1936, p. 34.

³¹ *ABC* (newspaper), 29 Nov. 1924, p. 36, and 10 Sept. 1930, p. 47; *La Vanguardia*, 4 Mar. 1934, p. 34.

³² Jordi Maluquer, *La inflación en España. Un índice de precios de consumo, 1830–2012* (Madrid, 2013), p. 41; Jordi Maluquer, *La economía española en perspectiva histórica siglos XVIII–XXI* (Barcelona, 2014), pp. 624–6.

³³ Luis Otero Carvajal, ‘La sociedad urbana y la irrupción de la modernidad en España, 1900–1936’, *Cuadernos de Historia Contemporánea*, 38 (2016), pp. 255–83.

³⁴ In relation to the average of the EU-15 countries, Spain’s GDP per capita increased from 61.7 per cent in 1915 to 70.3 per cent in 1935, according to the data of Albert Carreras and Xavier Tafunell, *Historia económica de la España contemporánea* (Barcelona, 2004), ‘Apéndice’, col. 4.

II

The spread of motor vehicles was, as seen above, extraordinarily dynamic and required both provisions on transport policy and adaptation processes in terms of infrastructures and rules. It was necessary to regulate the registration of vehicles, codify traffic regulations, and adapt existing roads to a new means of transport which was faster and more invasive. The car, while providing a solution to some previous problems, generated others of a new nature. Organic pollution caused by horses in big cities, which disappeared as these animals were superseded by cars, was replaced by new types of contamination such as noise pollution, road congestion, and petrol fumes, which added new harmful emissions to the atmosphere on top of those coming from factories and domestic coal consumption.³⁵ A new ‘disease’ also broke out with the car: traffic accidents, which escalated to become a serious twentieth-century epidemic. There were numerous consequences of the diffusion of motor vehicles and these tended to be very similar in all countries where the new means of transport proliferated rapidly, without excessive time lags, in line with a more integrated market and world. It seems clear that the motor vehicle was one of the signs of globalization during the second industrial revolution.

During the interwar period, the motor vehicle, with its invasive capacity, made changes to the existing road system inevitable. It was imperative to widen old roads, modify their camber and the radius of curvature, modernize or strengthen road surfaces, prepare crossings and crossroads, and, in general, extend the boundaries of road networks. Likewise, it was necessary to rethink territorial and urban planning, which was being instigated at this time, in line with the new type of roads necessary to accommodate the new ‘mechanical speeds’ and the dizzying modification of travel times and accessibility.³⁶ During the nineteenth century, the road network became subordinated to the railway network all over the world. However, before the Second World War, the tables had turned in favour of motor vehicles with roads taking precedence over railways. This led to what contemporaries, in Spain and more widely in Europe, called the ‘railway problem’.³⁷

As the 1920s progressed and regular and discretionary road transport lines expanded at the same rate as, or even at a greater pace than, private vehicles, competition became a problem. This gave rise to policies to help rail transport, in line with demands from powerful railway operators who fought defensively in

³⁵ Clive Ponting, *A green history of the world* (London, 1991); Agustín Nieto-Galán, *Cultura industrial. Historia y medio ambiente* (Barcelona, 2004), p. 51.

³⁶ The term ‘mechanical speeds’ is taken from Le Corbusier. See some of his main ideas on the subject in *Urbanisme* (1925), *La charte d’Athènes* (1942), and *Propos d’urbanisme* (1940).

³⁷ See Emilio Zurano, ‘¿Carreteras o ferrocarriles?’, *Madrid Científico*, 1141 (1925), pp. 193–6. For more on the competition between train and car, see also Theo C. Baker and Charles I. Savage, *An economic history of transport in Britain* (London, 1959).

every country. However, their attempts were futile because motor vehicles finally won the race. Coaches, buses, and private cars were more flexible and became cheaper, finally replacing rail travel, at least for short- and medium-distance trips. In Spain, the use of motor vehicles, both for the commercial transport of goods and for travellers, became more indispensable than in other countries, due to the low density of railway networks and their comparative shortcomings (slowness, comfort, interconnection, etc.).³⁸ Generally speaking, both in Spain and in other countries, the car generated collective enthusiasm and, as remarked on the occasion of the great 1929 Paris Motor Show, it was perceived as an ‘index of liberation’:

Nowadays, everything invites us to leave our homes: the cinematographer shows us all the corners of the world; all the nations, converted into giant hotels, invite us over through their tourist attraction organizations. Wherever we look, we find posters exhorting: ‘Visit this place’, ‘Don’t miss that place’. And these stimulating offers are linked to the private vehicle that can take us to all these locations for pleasure or art. Gone are the days of railways, with their lack of privacy, schedules and fixed itineraries. Now is the time for the private car, waiting for us at the door, always ready to take us as a family to wherever our fancy takes us ... The automobile offers us the mobility that we so eagerly want, and makes us free, or at least lengthens the chain that ties us to the slavery of daily tasks. This is the real reason why the masses are fascinated with the car: it is an index of liberation.³⁹

This account mentions three phenomena where the car was already involved: the emergence of tourism as an international economic phenomenon; the promotion of tourism consumption through ‘insinuating calls’; and the vehicle as an instrument for satisfying the new wants and desires that the emerging mass-consumption society was generating. Vehicle companies’ advertisements and the specialized press both placed the emphasis on the car–freedom equation.⁴⁰

A phenomenon of transnational mobility such as tourism required infrastructures that were articulated at an international level (international circuits), as well as an improvement of national road networks and a proper hierarchical organization in order to facilitate the movement of goods and travellers, given the fact that tourist mobility was a progressive factor from 1920 onwards.⁴¹ In 1926, Spain approved the National Tourism Circuit, a plan to develop an improved road network in response to ‘the great national interest in promoting tourism’, carried out by a special body called the Patronato

³⁸ Luis Marañón, ‘Política de transportes’, *Revista Nacional de Economía*, 109–11 (1933), pp. 301–10.

³⁹ ‘El XXIII Salón Francés del Automóvil. Celebrado en París del 3 al 13 de Octubre de 1929’, *Kinos. Automovilismo, Aeronáutica-Turismo*, 21 (Nov. 1929), p. 334.

⁴⁰ *The All British Standard Car Review*, which devoted considerable space to women and cars, and which was ‘published monthly by the Standard Motor Co., Ltd., Coventry, for the interest, assistance and entertainment of motorists and, especially, “Standard” car owners’ (vol. 1, no. 1, Mar.–Apr. 1931), is just one example.

⁴¹ Angelo Mariotti, *Lezioni di economia turistica* (Rome: Edizioni Tiber, 1927–8), p. 163.

Table 4 *Highway networks in Germany, Italy, and France, 1938*

Country	Highways(km)	Notes
Germany	7,000	
Italy	500	
France	80	Under construction: Paris-Banlieue Ouest

Source: Claude Leveillé-Nizerolle, *Le tourisme dans l'économie contemporaine* (Paris, 1938), pp. 77–8.

Nacional de Firms Especiales.⁴² Following the Spanish model, Portugal founded its Junta Autónoma de Estradas in 1927 and drew up a highway code and road plan in 1928, which was redefined in 1933 in order to improve car traffic conditions and connections with Spain, and to equip itself with national roads that guaranteed communications between commercial, industrial, agricultural, and tourism centres and ports and railway stations.⁴³ On 17 May 1928, Mussolini's Italy established its national road board, the Ente Nazionale per le Strade, which, like its state railways, Ferrovie dello Stato, was autonomous, and whose aim was to develop a comprehensive programme for reordering and improving Italian roads. In 1926, the fascist regime approved a highways (major roads) plan, a pioneer initiative in Europe. France had already considered the possibility of building highways in 1921, but its progress was very slow compared to the totalitarian regimes of Mussolini and Hitler's Germany, which had built around 7,000 km of these roads by 1938 (Table 4). Spain also participated directly in the European debate on 'special roads reserved for motor vehicles', which was inaugurated in the important fifth International Road Congress, held in Milan in 1926, and where the delegations of Italy, the United States, France, and the UK had a prominent role.⁴⁴

The development of roads in those years was not only motivated by tourism, but tourism as a motivation did gain an international presence. This was due to the proliferation of requests arising from the rise of motor vehicle and other forms of tourism. A summary published in a 1931 report from the US Department of Commerce entitled 'Promotion of tourist travel by foreign countries' clearly showed the large group of countries where tourism was a factor of great economic importance. This phenomenon was perceived in the traditional

⁴² Spanish Royal Decree-Law, 9 Feb. 1926, wherein the Circuito Nacional de Firms Especiales (CNFE) was created.

⁴³ Elsa Pacheco, 'Alteração das acessibilidades e dinâmicas na Região Norte: expectativas, intervenções e resultantes' (Ph.D. thesis, Porto, 2004).

⁴⁴ Francisco Javier Rodríguez Lázaro, *Las primeras autopistas españolas (1925/1936)* (Madrid, 2004), pp. 132–50. The fourth International Road Congress had been held in Seville in 1923.

tourism countries (Switzerland, Italy, and France) but also in others that in the early 1930s were considered as emerging tourism countries, such as Spain.⁴⁵ For this reason, a substantial outlay on advertising abroad was justifiable: nineteen countries in Europe (including Spain), six in the Americas, and eight on other continents invested large amounts of money in keeping tourist offices open in the USA to attract tourists from that country.⁴⁶ During these years, international organizations (mainly the League of Nations), states, regional administrations, and their respective public or private tourism organizations were more active than ever before and adopted three key measures in relation to tourism and road transport.

The first was the creation of major international routes that were solely for motor vehicles (highways), linked to national road networks which connected the main traffic centres quickly and safely. In this regard, the Geneva Congress of 1931, organized by the International Association of Recognised Automobile Clubs, should be mentioned. Four major international routes were established, mainly on the basis of a project devised by Piero Puricelli, spreading a 37,176-kilometre network of highways throughout Europe ‘for the greatest benefit of international tourism’.⁴⁷

The second measure was the construction of ‘purely tourist routes’ within each country, in order to reach attractive regions with poor access. France was one of the pioneer countries even before the First World War. Its first *route touristique* was opened in 1903 in Corniche de l’Esterel and put an isolated but charming region, which was not previously very accessible, on the map. The most important route, however, was located in the Alps and was almost finished in 1937 (after which construction was interrupted by the Second World War). Lake routes were the main attraction in Italy, particularly Lake Garda (the Gardesana) and another through the Dolomites, specially adapted for car traffic. Spain also promoted tourist routes as a state project from 1926. These are just a few examples. The car could reach places where trains could not, thereby expanding the geographical limits of tourism. This also stimulated the desire to visit destinations that those seeking to discover new ‘sights’ pointed out in road maps, tourist guides, or the pages of newspapers dedicated to tourism, which proliferated in Spain from the mid-1920s.⁴⁸

Third, the international spread of motor vehicles put the regulation of cross-border travel, and the need to simplify documents, requirements, and fees, on

⁴⁵ Rafael Vallejo, ‘Turismo en España durante el primer tercio del siglo XX: la conformación de un sistema turístico’, *Ayer*, 114 (2019), pp. 175–211; Rafael Vallejo, Elvira Lindoso, and Margarita Vilar, ‘La dimensión económica del turismo en España: la oferta turística’, in Vallejo and Larrinaga, eds., *Los orígenes del turismo moderno*, pp. 213–66.

⁴⁶ Leonard J. Lickorish and A. G. Kershaw, *The travel trade* (London, 1958), pp. 43–4.

⁴⁷ The four routes were the Euro-African, the Eurasian, the Trans-European, and the Baltic-Adriatic (Trimbach, *Le tourisme international*, pp. 123–4).

⁴⁸ Dean MacCannell, *The tourist: a new theory of the leisure class* (New York, NY, 1976), uses ‘sight’ to refer to places with tourist charm.

political agendas. In this regard, movement had enormous potential. In the interwar period, international travel was largely based on two factors: the recognition of the economic importance of tourism, and its value as a factor of harmony and understanding between nations (tourism diplomacy). The League of Nations was very active in this respect. It recommended simplifying border formalities, reducing or abolishing visa fees, and issuing international driving licences and *carnets de passage en douanes* (customs passes) for passenger vehicles, thus stimulating tourism. In 1929, around thirty countries authorized the American Automobile Association to issue these documents for American tourists, proof of the importance that car tourism had gained within global tourism.⁴⁹

Thanks to the expansion of motor vehicles in the first third of the twentieth century, and more precisely after the First World War, travel became a real industry—among other reasons because ‘commercial transport’ (which increased comfort, speed, and safety) was developed at this time.⁵⁰ Transport had traditionally absorbed much of the time and cost of a holiday or tourist trip. Now, the speed of new means of transport and the fall in prices reduced both factors, and brought territories and nations closer together. By the late 1920s, the structure of trips and excursions had visibly changed in international travel. The importance of rail travel had diminished in favour of the car, and air travel was beginning to attract attention. American, Canadian, and Italian tourism statistics from these years reflected the relative importance of the various means of transport. Italian statistics are particularly illustrative in this regard as they show the clear progression of motor vehicle tourism: while in 1931 over half of foreign tourists to Italy travelled by motor vehicle, just three years later that proportion had risen to more than two-thirds. Cross-border tourism between Canada and the United States was even more successful, as could be expected for two countries with a high degree of motorization. In 1926, Canadian visitors entering the United States by road already accounted for 68 per cent of the total, and in the early 1930s this figure rose to 83–4 per cent. Tourists visiting Canada were even more reliant on the car. In 1925, 82 per cent of foreign tourists already used this form of transport, and by 1933 this figure had risen to 92 per cent. The car had taken control of incoming tourism in North America. It was entirely logical, given that the United States and Canada led world car production in 1928, and occupied the top two positions in the world ranking of vehicles per 1,000 people (200 and 125, respectively) in 1930.⁵¹

⁴⁹ Lickorish and Kershaw, *Travel trade*, p. 43.

⁵⁰ E. L. Taylor, ‘The development of motor coach touring’, *Tourist Review*, 11, no. 1 (1956), pp. 20–3.

⁵¹ Trimbach, *Le tourisme international*, p. 106; Alex J. Norval, *The tourist industry* (London, 1936), p. 99.

Finally, collective road transport also helped replace the forms of transport that had previously been used for certain local routes or routes of particular tourist interest. A good example can be found in the route joining Warwick and the famous spa town of Leamington Spa (3 miles), where in 1905 the electric tram replaced the horse tram that had been introduced in 1881, and then in 1930 the motor bus definitively replaced the tram.⁵² A guide to Leamington Spa provided the key: the Midland Red bus company (RED Way) offered more frequent trips with greater flexibility to many of the towns and cities in this area of the Midlands, and fares were also cheaper, since passengers could buy a ticket for one day for all West Midland locations connected by the company.⁵³ This example provides a glimpse of how roads and motor vehicles won the fight against railways in the United Kingdom and throughout continental Europe.

III

The recent historiography on tourism in Spain makes it possible to verify how the cycles of tourism in the country during the first decades of the twentieth century were similar to those of other developed countries.⁵⁴ Moreover, the available figures for inbound tourism show Spain as an emerging country in international tourism: it occupied thirteenth place for foreign tourism revenue in 1931, and had risen to eleventh by 1933.⁵⁵

In the first decades of the twentieth century, tourism became a key sector in Spain both as a means to improve the country's image and because of its capacity to generate positive spillover effects in local economies and, in general, boost the country's modernization. Within this context, tourism was perceived as progress and the state had the obligation to defend it by means of an active tourism policy.⁵⁶ Notable among several initiatives was the creation of an institution called the *Comisaría Regia del Turismo y de la Cultura Artística* (1911–28) and later the foundation of the National Tourism Board (*Patronato Nacional de Turismo*) in 1928. The former concentrated on cultural activities and more folkloric aspects of the country, although there was no real

⁵² Jeff Watkin, *Royal Leamington Spa revisited* (Stroud, 2013), p. 86.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, p. 87.

⁵⁴ Rafael Vallejo, Margarita Vilar, and Elvira Lindoso, 'The tourism economy in Spain, 1900–1939: new sources, new methodologies and new results', *Journal of Tourism History*, 10 (2018), pp. 105–29.

⁵⁵ Vallejo, 'Turismo en España', p. 181; Vallejo, Lindoso, and Vilar, 'La dimensión económica', p. 226.

⁵⁶ For further details of Spain's tourism policy during the first decades of the twentieth century, see especially Ana Moreno Garrido, *Historia de turismo en España en el siglo XX* (Madrid, 2007); Ana Moreno Garrido, 'La política turística, 1905–1931', in Vallejo and Larrinaga, eds., *Los orígenes del turismo moderno*, pp. 315–44. See also Carmelo Pellejero, 'La actuación del estado en materia turística durante la dictadura de Primo de Rivera', *Revista de Historia Económica*, 1 (2002), pp. 149–58.

connection between tourism bodies and the tourism sector itself. The latter incorporated tourism into the state's agenda of priorities and had the backing of the influential business lobby. In this respect, attention should also be drawn to the National Tourism Board's role in promoting important public works in transport and communications and encouraging the building of hotels with state aid.⁵⁷ All these factors were key elements in developing the sector. Overall, what was being developed during this period was a strategy of tourism policy supported by two pillars: constructing the basic traits of touristic Spain and selling this image abroad.

The arrival of the Second Republic (1931–6) led to a restructuring of the monarchic National Tourism Board, after subjecting it to a severe political and financial audit.⁵⁸ One of the main strategic novelties was making it possible to spread the profits from tourism to the middle and working poorer classes, in stark contrast to the previous body, which had exhibited a more aristocratic and elitist vision. The Republican National Tourism Board also tried to improve Spain's image abroad in order to attract new visitors from other countries. Nevertheless, inadequate funding at a time of budgetary savings, a lack of internal government stability, and the difficult international context after the impact of the Great Depression hindered this task.⁵⁹

However, tourism is only partly the result of tourism policy. Hence, despite the limitations of tourism policies seen above, new forms of mobility during this period implied not only quantitative but also qualitative changes. The mode of travel, the tourism experience, destinations, and attractions all evolved considerably. This was not only true for individuals; the tourism industry was also transformed, as were the forms of tourism this sector promoted. Moreover, the structure of international travel was revolutionized. In Spain, from 1919, when the country's first commercial flight took place, all the means of transport that characterize the modernity of the twentieth century were present: trains, trams, steamships, aeroplanes, and motor vehicles, both private and collective.⁶⁰ This combination of means of transport led to both

⁵⁷ The large-scale road building and undertaking of numerous other important public works in Spain during the Primo de Rivera dictatorship (1923–30) was closely related to the simultaneous experience of the Italian fascist regime. In this respect, it should not be overlooked that the Spanish dictator had a persistent tendency to seek inspiration in the Italian mirror, as explained in the work of Juan Avilés, 'Un pálido reflejo del fascismo: la dictadura de Primo de Rivera en los informes diplomáticos italianos', *Pasado y Memoria Revista de Historia Contemporánea*, 16 (2017), pp. 69–90, <https://doi.org/10.14198/PASADO2017.16.04>.

⁵⁸ Moreno, 'La política turística', pp. 341–2.

⁵⁹ Carmelo Pellejero, 'La política turística durante la República, 1931–1936', in Vallejo and Larrinaga, eds., *Los orígenes del turismo moderno*, pp. 345–80.

⁶⁰ Javier Vidal, 'Los nuevos sistemas de transporte y el turismo: aportación del automóvil y la aviación a la movilidad en la España del primer tercio del siglo XX', in Vallejo and Larrinaga, eds., *Los orígenes del turismo moderno*, pp. 653–78.

Table 5 *Motor vehicles in use on Spanish roads, 1935*

Private cars	109,468
Rental and taxis	26,900
Lorries and vans	46,073
Motorcycles	12,836
Buses and coaches	4,493
Total	199,770

Source: Ministerio de Hacienda, Dirección General de Rentas Públicas, *Estadística del impuesto de la patente nacional de circulación de automóviles. Año 1935* (Madrid, 1936). The value for buses is an estimate for the years 1930–3 from José L. Hernández Marco, ‘Las primeras reacciones de las compañías ferroviarias españolas al inicio de la competencia automovilística antes de la Guerra Civil’, *Revista de Historia Económica*, 2 (2002), pp. 335–63, at p. 350 (taking the mean figure for those years).

general and tourist mobility within the country being more intense and more diversified, aided by the proliferation of telephone communications.⁶¹

Within this process, it should be noted that motorized road transport brought about a swift transformation in the behaviour of tourists, while it also became the backbone of a society that promoted consumption, and it was effectively a link to new lifestyles.⁶² The advance of road mobility was very rapid. Hence, while in 1910 there were only 0.2 motor vehicles per 1,000 inhabitants, by 1935, just in the category of passenger vehicles, there were now 5.7 per 1,000 inhabitants. Overall, in 1935 there were almost 200,000 motor vehicles in use, distributed as shown in Table 5.

In this vehicle population, private cars accounted for almost 55 per cent of this total and, in general, passenger transport vehicles, both private and in public service, accounted for more than three-quarters of the total. We do not have figures for the total number of people who travelled in all of these vehicles. Figures available for the main collective means of land transport in 1934 register 929 million passengers: that is, thirty-eight trips per inhabitant, given a population of 23.4 million (Table 6). It can be seen that local, urban, and metropolitan forms of transport (trams and trolleybuses), moved roughly three-quarters of travellers, followed by trains and buses. Buses (including

⁶¹ For the development of tourism demand in Spain, see Rafael Vallejo, Elvira Lindoso, and Margarita Vilar, ‘La dimensión económica del turismo en España: la demanda turística, 1900–1939’, in Vallejo and Larrinaga, eds., *Los orígenes del turismo moderno*, pp. 267–314. For more on the improvement of roads and telecommunications, see Charles L. Freeston, *The roads of Spain: a practical guide to a motorist’s paradise* (London, 1930), pp. 14–27.

⁶² As established in Mom, *Atlantic automobilism*, p. 241.

Table 6 *Structure of land transport collective travel in Spain, 1934*

Vehicle type	Travellers (millions)	Percentage (%)
Tram	634	68.2
Trolleybus	136	14.6
Train	101	10.9
Bus	58	6.2
Total	929	100

Source: Albert Carreras and Xavier Tafunell, eds., *Estadísticas históricas de España siglos XIX y XX* (Bilbao, 2005), p. 557.

coaches), a comparatively cheap means of transport, carried 58 million passengers in 1934 – rather more than half the number of train passengers.⁶³

During the interwar period there were two basic forms of motor vehicle tourism in Spain. One group was based on car drivers who owned their own vehicles. The other, more numerous, group comprised the users of collective vehicles for tourism purposes, usually travelling in groups. The former grew to significant numbers, although continuing to be of a somewhat elitist nature, while the latter served as a channel to extend these practices to a wider public.

Motor vehicle tourism by private car was not restricted to national tourists. There were also foreign tourists arriving by car. Unlike in the cases of Italy, the United States, or Canada, the official statistics available in Spain for 1929–34, from the National Tourism Board, are not at all clear. They do not show the means of access of foreign tourism, as this is classified as ‘they entered by crossing the border’, at times via locations where there was both road and rail access. The most reliable data available – although not complete – come from the statistics of ‘Foreign vehicles that have been issued a receipt for the acquisition of an international tourist licence’ to enter the country.⁶⁴ There were a total of 26,662 private passenger vehicles in 1929, and 41,760 in 1932; we estimate that there could have been approximately 44,700 in 1934, which was the equivalent of 45 per cent of all the private cars then registered in Spain. These figures include day trippers and tourists (those who are away for more than 24 hours), although it is not possible to clearly distinguish one from the other. A singular phenomenon of this tourism was that of ‘caravans’: that is, motorists who travelled in groups, following the same route, usually organized by an automobile club or tourism association, on the occasion of some international event, whether trials related to the

⁶³ Other authors estimate a higher figure: see Hernández Marco, ‘La oferta automovilística’.

⁶⁴ Patronato Nacional de Turismo, *Memoria correspondiente a la liquidación, revisión y transformación del Patronato Nacional del Turismo, ordenada por el Gobierno provisional de la República en su Decreto de 23 de abril de 1931. Anejos de la Memoria* (Madrid, 1931).

‘international automobile circuit’ or congresses, such as the International Railway Congress held in Madrid in 1930.⁶⁵

On the other hand, group travel by bus and coach was a key element in the social diffusion of road travel in Spain, helping this pervade increasingly broad sectors of society. This process was given a great boost by regular bus lines, which expanded and spread rapidly, occasional organized trips, and also group journeys organized systematically, on an industrial scale, by bus companies or travel agencies, as excursions, including the more elitist trips of *gran turismo* (grand tourism).⁶⁶

The coach increased the possibilities of travelling, both territorially and socially, giving rise to several facets or forms of travel: mountain and nature tourism, urban and cultural tourism, and religious tourism, both inside and outside Spain. During the interwar period, this type of travel received the name ‘excursion’. In fact, there was a kind of excursion fever at this time that led to the diffusion, in the main Spanish cities, of small associations of active tourism, cyclists, hikers and rambles, archaeological societies, and the like.

Within the road passenger transport market, two types of operators were active after the regulations passed in 1924: those that had a licence to run regular lines of passenger transport (buses and coaches) on an exclusive basis; and ‘free’ transport undertakings: ‘taxi drivers, buses and coaches for excursions, and lorries for goods without a fixed route’.⁶⁷ Within the first group, there were 2,444 lines of ‘authorized public services of motor vehicles’ in 1933, covering a total distance of almost 100,000 kilometres.⁶⁸ For these regular bus and coach lines, tourist travel was only a fraction of their business, and difficult to quantify, but this service was fundamental to access all corners of the country. In 1935, ‘Spain certainly does not have a very large number of kilometres of railways’; however, it did have an extensive system of inter-urban road communications. Via this network, a substantial number of bus companies ‘provide their services with coaches of the world’s best makes, unbeatable in terms of comfort and safety, with extremely attractive timetables and

⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁶ See Rafael Vallejo and Carlos Larrinaga, ‘Travel agencies in Spain during the first third of the 20th century: a tourism business in the making’, *Business History* (2020), <https://doi.org/10.1080/00076791.2019.1685503>. For the expansion of the social base of Spanish tourism in this period, see Vallejo, Vilar, and Lindoso, ‘Tourism economy’.

⁶⁷ According to the description in Marañón, ‘Política de transportes’, p. 305. For the regulation of road transport and the concession of transport lines for vehicles with mechanical engines, see Real decreto de 4 de julio de 1924 (y su Reglamento de 11 de diciembre de 1924) and Reales decretos de 22 de febrero y 21 de junio de 1929 (y su Reglamento de 22 de junio de 1929), discussed in José María Coronado, Francisco Javier Rodríguez, and Rita Ruiz Fernández, ‘El transporte regular de viajeros por carretera en España, 1924–1936: ordenación legislativa y análisis del sector’, *Revista de Historia Industrial*, 52 (2013), pp. 111–37.

⁶⁸ For the case of Spain, see *Anuario estadístico de España* for 1931 and 1933 (Madrid, 1933 and 1934); also Luis Marañón, ‘Política de transportes’, *Revista Nacional de Economía*, 112 (1933), pp. 501–15.

prices'.⁶⁹ In general, in the provinces where the density of railways was lower, the density of regular services of road passenger transport was greater.⁷⁰ The information on these services was summarized in a guide issued by the National Tourism Board, the first edition of which appeared in 1929.

With regard to the second group of operators, the small business entrepreneurs with 'buses and coaches for excursions' (that is, specifically for tourism use), we do not know their number, but we do know that their advertising flourished from the mid-1920s. These advertisements show how road passenger transport for tourist trips in Spain 'became an authentic industry', with a diversity of products and targeting all types of people, especially the 'modest classes' in the 1930s.⁷¹ As well as this segment of tourist buses and coaches, some travel agencies, such as Thomas Cook or Marsans, and some associations involved in tourism, also acquired coaches.⁷² In short, in Spain in the 1930s, as in many other European countries, the roads were now a significant part of the 'vital network throughout which tourists circulate'.⁷³

IV

The development of motor vehicles during the first decades of the twentieth century and their mass production and consumption had significant economic and social effects. The developed Atlantic countries, world leaders in vehicle production, were the protagonists of this success of the car. However, the globalization brought about by the second industrial revolution drew in other countries on the periphery through the use of transport technologies, telecommunications, and the mass media (the illustrated press, radio, and cinema). Over and beyond the degree of development, the consumption patterns and lifestyles of the 'centres' and the 'peripheries' tended to become more uniform, especially among the urban population. During the interwar period, this included an interest in travelling and leisure activities in general.

This article has shown how the expansion of the use of the motor vehicle in Spain during the period under study helped bring new habits of consumption and tourism practices to the country, similar to other countries considered to be more developed in terms of GDP per capita. Spain participated in this expansion despite not being a significant producer of automobiles, in contrast to

⁶⁹ Patronato Nacional del Turismo, *Cómo se viaja en España* (Madrid, c. 1935), p. 5.

⁷⁰ Rita Ruiz, José M. Coronado, and F. Javier Rodríguez, 'Los servicios ferroviarios y los servicios regulares de transporte de viajeros por carretera en España en los años previos a la Guerra Civil: una aproximación territorial', paper presented at the VI Congreso de Historia Ferroviaria, Vitoria, 2012, <https://docutren.com/HistoriaFerroviaria/Vitoria2012/pdf/5034.pdf>.

⁷¹ *El Heraldo Español*, 4 Mar. 1932, p. 7; *Luz*, 25 Apr. 1934, p. 7.

⁷² One example of such associations is the Sindicato de Iniciativas in Valencia, which in 1934 inaugurated a twenty-two-seater 'coach for excursions' with a Pullman-style interior: *Revista Luz*, 16 Jan. 1934, p. 9.

⁷³ Trimbach, *Le tourisme international*, p. 106.

several more advanced countries at this time. The private automobile, that is, the passenger car, which is called a *turismo* in Spain, and collective motor vehicles revolutionized mobility during the first third of the twentieth century, as pleasure trips became available to increasingly broad sectors of society. In this way, the foundations were laid for new forms of behaviour in an incipient tourism industry, which barely two decades later would be a key element in the country's production structure.

The Spanish philosopher José Ortega y Gasset explained this well in *The revolt of the masses* (*La rebelión de las masas*, 1930), which was widely disseminated in Europe in the 1930s. He affirmed that the rebellion of the masses 'comprises all our collective habits, including our fashions both of dress and of amusement' and that 'the life of the ordinary man is today made up of the same vital repertory which before characterized only the superior minorities'. He went on to conclude that 'there is hardly a place on the continent where strictly the same does not happen', a trend that he identified as the 'frightful homogeneity of situations into which the entire West is sinking'.⁷⁴

This technical, cultural, and socio-economic confluence, apart from the obvious national differences, ultimately explains how some of the countries of the European periphery that had not developed an automotive industry soon joined the mass consumption of the automobile and adopted the social uses implicit therein, including tourist trips (a good indicator of the process). Spain is an excellent example from this group of countries.

Here in Spain, the development of the car set in motion 'touring', a form of car tourism that reduced the length of stays and shortened the time between the point of departure and the destination. It also fragmented the time for leisure travel into short trips, opened up a variety of new routes, and enabled trips to unknown places or to areas that were hard to reach by rail or other traditional means of transport. These activities were, of course, initially carried out by the elites. However, during the interwar period, they gradually became accessible to wider social groupings due to the spectacular progress of means of collective transport (buses and coaches). This evolution included trips organized by travel agencies, self-organized trips by regional groups travelling to their province of origin during the summer, educational trips, trips for youth groups or young people from political parties, and trips arranged by work centres or trade union organizations. These new patterns of tourist mobility, barely studied from this perspective, were part of a broader process of modernization of Spanish society, visible in the dynamism of its cities. When we take a closer look at these, we can confirm that this peripheral country, despite its relative degree of economic backwardness, was joining the mass consumption society, in which the motor vehicle would take on an increasingly important role.

⁷⁴ José Ortega y Gasset, *La rebelión de las masas* (Barcelona, 1983; orig. edn 1930), pp. 9–12 and 39–49.