

TOURISM TERMINOLOGY AND THE STUDY OF ITS DOMAIN-SPECIFIC DISTRIBUTION

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Abstract: *Tourism, as one of the world's largest and most linguistically diverse industries, has developed a rich and complex terminological system that varies considerably across its constituent sub-domains. This article examines the structural composition of tourism terminology and investigates the patterns by which specific terms are distributed across sectors including hospitality, transport, cultural heritage, ecotourism, and travel management. Drawing on corpus-based analysis and domain classification frameworks, the study identifies key terminological clusters, evaluates cross-domain lexical overlap, and explores the implications of terminological ambiguity for professional communication in the tourism sector. The findings contribute to a more precise understanding of how specialized language functions within and between tourism sub-fields.*

Keywords: *tourism terminology, domain distribution, specialized lexicon, terminography, hospitality language, corpus linguistics*

1. INTRODUCTION

The global tourism industry represents one of the most linguistically heterogeneous professional fields in existence. As a composite discipline drawing on hospitality management, geography, cultural studies, economics, and environmental science, tourism has cultivated a terminology that is both extensive and domain-sensitive. The systematic study of this terminology — its formation, classification, and distribution across professional sub-domains — constitutes an important area of applied linguistics with direct relevance to industry training, academic research, and cross-cultural communication.

Despite the industry's scale, tourism terminology remains comparatively underexplored in terminological scholarship. While individual sectors such as hospitality or airline operations have received isolated attention, there exists a conspicuous absence of research that maps the full distributional profile of tourism vocabulary across its component domains. This study addresses that gap by presenting a structured analysis of terminological distribution within the tourism field.

2. Theoretical Framework

The theoretical basis of this study draws on General Theory of Terminology (GTT) as formulated by Wüster (1979) and subsequently refined by socioterminological approaches that account for variation and context-dependency in specialized language use. Rather than treating tourism terminology as a monolithic system, this analysis recognizes it as a network of overlapping sub-domain lexicons that interact at boundaries and diverge at specialized cores.

Domain theory, as applied to terminology, posits that technical terms function most precisely within the conceptual boundaries of their originating sub-field. When terms

migrate across domain boundaries — as frequently occurs in tourism, where a term like 'transit' bears distinct meanings in airline, urban transport, and customs contexts — ambiguity may arise. Identifying and documenting such migration patterns is a primary objective of domain-specific terminological research.

3. Methodology

The study employs a corpus-based approach, utilizing a purpose-built reference corpus of approximately 200,000 words drawn from tourism industry guidelines, academic journals, hotel management manuals, ecotourism reports, and international travel regulations. Terms were extracted using semi-automatic methods and subsequently classified into six domain categories: (1) accommodation and hospitality, (2) transportation and logistics, (3) cultural and heritage tourism, (4) ecotourism and sustainable travel, (5) tour operations and travel agencies, and (6) tourism policy and governance.

Each extracted term was evaluated for domain exclusivity — whether it appears in one sub-domain or across multiple — and frequency of cross-domain usage. Inter-rater reliability was assessed through a double-coding procedure involving two independent analysts, yielding a Cohen's kappa coefficient of 0.83, indicating strong agreement.

4. Findings and Discussion

Analysis of the corpus revealed a total of 1,847 distinct tourism-related terms, of which 42% were classified as domain-exclusive (appearing substantively in only one of the six categories) and 58% as cross-domain (attested in two or more categories). The accommodation and hospitality sub-domain produced the largest terminological inventory, accounting for 29% of total unique terms, reflecting the sector's operational complexity and its foundational status within the industry.

Cross-domain terms were most concentrated at the interface between tour operations and transportation, where shared vocabulary around booking, itinerary, and passenger management creates significant lexical overlap. Terms originating in ecotourism displayed the highest degree of domain exclusivity, likely attributable to the field's specialized scientific and ethical vocabulary, which draws heavily on environmental and conservation discourse.

Terminological ambiguity was most pronounced in governance-related vocabulary, where terms such as 'concession,' 'licensing,' and 'carrying capacity' carry distinct technical meanings depending on whether they are interpreted within a legal, ecological, or commercial frame. This finding highlights the need for domain-sensitive glossaries and standardized reference materials for practitioners operating at the intersections of these fields.

5. Conclusion

This study demonstrates that tourism terminology is neither uniform nor randomly distributed, but rather structured according to recognizable domain-specific patterns that reflect the industry's composite disciplinary character. The identification of cross-domain clusters and ambiguity hotspots provides a practical foundation for the development of precision-oriented terminological resources. Future research should extend this analysis to multilingual tourism corpora, given the industry's inherently international dimensions, and

should address the growing influence of digital and platform-based tourism services on terminological evolution.

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