

## **Rural Tourism in Natural Parks in Andalusia: An Analysis of the Demand of the Tourist Consumer**

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### **Abstract**

*The Andalusian region in Spain, is famous for being a tourist area of great singularity with different degrees of development and models of touristic exploitation, strongly characterized by its offer of sun and beach. Today, this community does not limit itself to only offering sun and beach since not all the tourists that choose this as their destination have exclusive preference for this sector. Among all these new proposals there is one modality, rural tourism, that is the focal point of this study, especially the initiatives for rural tourism in Natural Parks. Rural tourism has become the solution for some problems that have emerged in rural areas: high rate of unemployment, rural exodus, primary sector dependence... So the practice of this activity will generate and diversify the income, plural-activity, it will create employment... For this reason it is necessary to offer a product that is adapted to the tourist consumer's demand, so it is essential to know profile of the tourist. We will show the results which have been obtained in the analysis of two researches. The first of them has been done in Andalusia. We can find on it the consumer profile of rural tourism in this region. In the second one, obtained data of three natural parks in Córdoba have been analysed, showing the level of satisfaction that the tourists got after their stay in the area.*

**Key words:** rural tourism, Andalusia, Spain, rural development, natural park , Logistic Regression.

### **1. Introduction**

Rural tourism is a tool to get a regional development where there is a socio-economic imbalance. In Spain, rural areas with low levels of income and productivity still prevail. Generally, they focus their production in economic activities directly related to the primary sector and they have high rates of unemployment. They need to diversify their income.

In these regions they need a sustainable growth through an economic culture based on efficient administration of the rural resources, in the involvement of the population... whose main aim will be the search of a socio-economic and environmental balance. Additional income to the ones they were getting and stable employment will be got by rural tourism (Etxano, 2009). All in all, it will be contribute to the reduction of poverty and to the income redistribution. We do not fight for becoming tourism that main source of income in these regions, but we think it could be an additional income's contribution for these regions' inhabitants. It would lead to saturation of the rural environment with a high probability, provoking the immediate loss of are of the most demanded resources by the tourist consumer.

Tourist wishes to stay in contact with the natural environment (Mediano,2004), he or she is declined to go for a rural tourism in contact with the natural environment getting away from the tourism that, traditionally was being developed, a tourism of sun and sea, because this latter tourism did not satisfy the new needs that appear in our society in the recent years (Gale, 2005).

Environment which is one of the causes for concern in society, the search of sustainable development close to the necessity of looking for satisfaction in their free time such as being in contact with nature or cohabitation with the family, does that rural tourism becomes an emerging tourism. This tourism satisfies in a higher degree the needs that the tourist consumer has nowadays. A niche of market has appeared due to this change in the values of the current tourist consumer. Rural areas can take advantage of this niche to generate additional income.

## **2. Rural Tourism: Economic Factor to Rural Areas**

Although our research deals with the rural tourism, we are not going to deepen on exposing the complexity that exists in the current bibliography to determine or to specify rural tourism's definition. There are different existing concepts between experts to establish a definition with clarity and accuracy, because of that, even nowadays there is no a unanimous one. In fact, we can say that the term has different meanings in different countries. This first one says (Traverso, 1996): "the tourist activity of sustainable establishment in the rural environment" and the second definition says (Blanco, 1994): "a singular expression of the new ways of tourism, characterized by: (a) being developed out of urban settlements, (b) being produced in a reduced way through to wide places generally, (c) using diversely some resources characteristic of the rural environment such as natural, cultural resources, (d) contributing to the local development and to the tourist diversification and competitiveness.

Starting from this premise, this research considers rural tourism will help to do dynamic and to update the rural area helping to solve arduous socio-economic problems that these regions have to face up to. The dependence of the generated income to the primary sector is also one of those problems. Rural Andalusia holds a high rate population who work in the agricultural sector. Statistical studies show a high percentage of population working in this sector in the region, more than 50 % per cent of the Andalusia towns have more than a 25% per cent of population working in the primary sector, showing an urgent need to diversify income.

Rural tourism represents a key component to the socio-economic development in the regions. It will make possible to diversify the income of the rural population to guarantee a prosperous development of the region, so it proposes an activity that will generate additional income and an element that distribute that income. Indoor areas have to be conscious of the opportunity that has emerged, and they have to take advantage of the gap in the market because everyone knows the new interest in this type of tourism on the consumer in the recent decades. There has been a strong interest about sports, cultural, gastronomic activities in a rural environment (Soteriades,2011).

Multiple factors have bearing on the change of the habits and tourist consumer's values, and it is essential to know the profile of the consumer of this tourism and to offer a specialised product that is adapted to the needs of that tourism.

Rural tourism is an economic factor with some features that become special (Millan & Melian; 2010). This tourism is carried out with more periodicity, decreasing the typical seasonal nature of this area, an area of a great importance from an economic point of view. Mainly, because the created employment will not have to be temporary as the great majority of the employment created by tourism. Tourism leads into a multiplying effect in the population of these rural areas. It diversifies the obtained income; it decreases the dependence with the primary sector and reduces the economic risk which it entails. So this rural tourism will help to redistribute the income between regions, and it will encourage to the creation of employment directly, an employment destined for producing tourist nature service and, at the same time, it created indirect employed destined for the obtaining of the used commodities markets in the production of properties and goods and consumed services by the tourists (Parada & Rodriguez, 2008).

At the same time, the establishment of the tourist activity in rural areas may be an element according to other areas (Ciruela, 2008). It is an exodus to urban areas on the part of the population. Equally, this tourism will help to decrease the high rates of unemployment. These two are the sharpest difficulties that these societies are suffering in the development.

It does not mean to fight for becoming tourism in the main resource of income of these areas; on the contrary, it is a contribution of additional income for the inhabitants of them (Fuller, 2011). Because if the contrary case took place, it would entail a high probability of saturation in the rural area.

And, it is hoped to promote the sustainable of the environment to generate wealth and employment in the course of the time. So, the maintenance and conservation of the environment will provoke a respectful tourist development with the natural and cultural environment. It is essential to avoid the saturation of rural tourist centres such as Arroyo Frío in the province of Jaén.

Equally, it is essential the co-operation, dialogue and co-ordination of the different socio-economic factors and the institutions (local, regional & supranational). Besides, it is necessary to imply the society and to educate it. Of course, the participation of the people is a momentous factor in order to get a rise in the association between towns. And one of the main weaknesses is the increasing public awareness on the existence of a potential in the region to exploit (Bel & Arranz, 2011). It is necessary to raise the grade of inhabitants' commitment of the region in tourism matters, because they will be the most benefited. Equally, the public bodies should promote development plans to make the tourist activity easier in these regions. Although the growth of every region has to be motivated from the own region, we should consider the resources and possibilities of the area and we have to boost them to offer a product which satisfies tourist consumer's needs fully.

Tourist activity will not cancel the agricultural one but it will help to correct regional imbalances. Small growers and family farms will be able to benefit from a higher involvement of society in this sector, so the union of synergies between public and private bodies will be a fact (Anton et al., 2007). But rural tourism will also spark off negative effects in these areas (Cunha, 2010); in a long-term period cost of living will increase, agricultural area will decrease (Buckey, 2012)... because of all those things, it will be necessary an effective and efficient planning and running of all the regional resources being conscious that tourist destinations should not flood, otherwise they will miss all their charm (Zhong et al., 2011).

### ***3. Necessity to Adjust the Supply Fit with the Demand***

The rural tourism is an emerging sector in Andalusia but the sun and sea tourism is, of course, the main source of wealth. The appearance of new types of tourism due to the demand of tourist consumers has done the surfacing of gaps in the market (Tubb, 2003; Hares, et al., 2010; Mbaiwa & Stronza, 2010; Spenceley, 2008). The search of new emotions (adventure, historical places, new experiences and so on) have produced changes which happened in the consumer's behaviour, they are the causes of the emerged change in rural areas: (a) **the reversal of population pyramid** is a beneficial aspect for the tourist sector, because the groups with a higher economic stability, such as adults and senior citizens, are much more numerous than in the previous decades. (b) **The change of the woman role**, causing changes in the consumption habits, due to the fact that the couple works out of home. Besides, the family desire to enjoy the shared free time all together intensely, breaking with the work routine radically (Del Barrio et al., 2012). They look for the satisfaction of the needs and prospects in their wished rests. (c) **Habits and values of the population have changed**. Nowadays, population is interested in keeping and getting a praiseworthy health and a perfect body. Because of that, it is tried to do activities in a closer environment, closer to the natural. Because people suffer stress in their work and daily life, the tourist consumer looks for improving or eliminating these aspects. (d) **The quality of life of the population** has been increased. (e) Equally, a rise of **the available income levels** has been produced; meaning a bigger part of the family income is available for holidays and travels. (f) There has been **a rise of the free time** thanks to the workers' retirement in an early age, to the flexibility in some aspects of the work market: paid-holidays, a drop of the working day... Everything has taken part in the development of an important industry related to time off, it is the tourism.

In this point, we will show the results which have been obtained in the analysis of two researches. The first of them has been done in Andalusia. We can find on it the consumer profile of rural tourism in this region. In the second one, obtained data of three natural parks in Córdoba have been analysed, showing the level of satisfaction that the tourists got after their stay in the area.

All these are dealt because there is an urgent need to know motivations and attributes that entail the consumer to do this type of tourism. We have to take into account the current demand, in order to take all the necessary measurements to satisfy their changing needs. To sum up, knowing their profile and offering an adequate product.

#### **3.1 The demand of rural tourism in Andalusia**

To determine the features of the demand of rural tourism in Andalusia, a survey of 1200 individuals was taken during November and December 2008 and from January to June 2010 of the eight provinces of Andalusia.

They were segmented according to the percentage of population, being 1017 inquiries validated and being the reliable level of 98% per cent and the margin of error of 2% per cent. The data processing of the survey and the design of the econometric model were using the computer tool of SSPS and EVIEWS. The obtained results were the following: (a) In Andalusia, the supply is still inadequate focusing the most of the accommodations in the close areas to the 23 natural parks (Pulido & Cárdenas, 2011) that we can find in this region. About a 30% per cent of the supply is non-declared because there are a lot of illegal accommodations which do not abide the rules of healthiness and security that are asked for the regional government. It is a phenomenon that can harm rural tourism image. Because of that more measurements and control are necessary to avoid this type of accommodation. (Nevertheless, data from Andalusia Statistics Institute show as the supply of rural accommodation is experimenting a import rise, increasingly this one to 463 accommodations in 2010 (IEA,2010), it means a 31 per cent more than the existing ones in the previous year, and it shows a similar rise in the percentage of the number of places in the rural accommodations. However, the prices per person and per day of a rural accommodation are a 12.4% cheaper than in other regions. (b) Being still considered rural tourism with a very affordable price, people who practice tourism are individuals with monthly average income between 1000 euros and 1300 euros. Shooting up if we analyse the individuals who do rural tourism motivated by snow sports, mainly skiing. Their average income is between 1800 € and 2300€ monthly. (c) 23.4% per cent of the people who did rural tourism in the survey, chose a close area to their residence, because 94.7% of the people use their own vehicle to travel, whereas the 3% left uses public transports, although it is because in the region the network roads with rural areas is quite poor, a bit outlying in relation to the main communication links. Equally, we extract from the survey that a 54.3% opt for a rural destination other province of Andalusia and the 22.3 left prefer other regions.



**Fig. 1:** Location of the Natural Parks in Andalusia. The Natural Park of Cardena-Montoro is the zone with number 5. *Source:* Junta de Andalucía, 2012.

Knowing tourist motivation, their needs which push him or her to act and behave in a concrete way to get the satisfaction of his or her needs... would do possible to offer the ideal tourist product. Only the 28.7% of the survey practice rural tourism in the period mentioned above. Of them, the 38.2% declare that the motivation that drive them to choose this type of tourism was being in contact with nature; the 6.4% to play some sports, hunting, fishing, skiing...; the 35.4% by the tranquillity that means this type of destination; the 4.3% by visiting to relatives or friends or having a second housing in the rural area, and a 7.9% by the cultural attractions. (b) What the economic and demographic features owned the people who travelled? We can differentiate a first section made up by individual of 20 to 30 years old. They travel on their own or with another person. They represent the 48.6% of the survey. The second group is made up by individuals of 31 to 50 years old who travelled with all their family or almost all the members, being 3 as a minimum. They represent the 39.5%. The age categories left, that is, people younger than 20 and/or older than 50, are non-significant over the total because the people younger than 20 in the 94% of the cases were going with the head of family and the people older than 50 in the 86.5% did rural tourism but visiting relatives and this of tourism is not considered a tourism which generates wealth in the area. Important differences between the features of the two groups can be distinguished:

GROUP 1: monthly income of the individuals of this group is about 700 €. The average expense is about 35€ including accommodation and the holiday period of time is about 4 days. They know the destination through internet mainly and the motivations lead them to the place are playing sports such mountain, climbing, hiking...

GROUP 2: on the contrary, monthly income of the individuals that constitute this group is about 1800 €; the average expense is about 43.4 € including the accommodation and their holiday period of time is about 7 days; as we can appreciate, economic figures are much more higher. They know the destination by booklets and friends' pieces of advice mainly. The motivations lead them to this destination are tranquillity that prevails in the local regions and the contact with nature.

### 3.2 Rural tourism in the natural parks of the province of Córdoba.

This section is based on the search what is carried out in the province of Córdoba from March to June 2010 when this survey was done to 552 individuals who have done rural tourism in any of the three Natural Parks of the province: the natural park of Cardena y Montoro, situated in the northeast of the province of Córdoba, bordering with the Subética, located in the southeast. Throughout LOGIT model will be shown the probability of satisfaction in relation to the expectations which the tourist who visits it has from the destination of the rural tourism according to the socio-economic profile. Initially, by means of a descriptive analysis of the survey we got the following results: the 82.1% of the polled tourists were from the Andalusia, the 9.2% were from Madrid, the 4.1% came from Castilla-La Mancha and the 3.3% came from Calaluña and the 1.9% of the rest of regions; only the 0.2% was foreigners. And in relation to the knowledge of the existence of the visited Natural Park: the 46.3% of the tourists have visited before, the 37.8% by friends and relatives' advices, the 12.1% by Internet, and the 3.8% left by other media.

The variable subject of study was the satisfaction that the polled person got after having done their holidays of rural tourism in a park: *gs*, tabulated as dichotomist variable (1- satisfied), (0- non-satisfied). The main pre-determined variables used in this survey have been:

- Sex of the polled person
- Age (more than 18 years old)
- Area, place of residence that has tabulated as dichotomist variable (1-urban area), (0- rural area)
- Marital status. It has divided between varied artificial variables of binary choice, highlighting the main categories **ecs** (marital status single), **ecc** (marital status married), **ecd/s** (marital status divorced/separated), and **eco** (other marital status).
- Family income: **rf**, measures in thousands of euros per month.
- Numbers of people who are in the family: **nif**
- Numbers of people who were on holidays belonging to the family or with a certain degree of emotional relationship with the polled individual: **niv**.
- Type of accommodation used for holidays: **hr-cr** (rural hotels), **ap** (flats), **bal** (spa or thermal spa), **alo** (other types of accommodation).
- Expenses spent for holidays: **gr**.
- Individual would repeat the same kind of tourism: **re**, tabulated as dichotomic variable (1-yes) (0-no).
- Holiday days spent in the type of tourism: **dv**.
- Academic level of the individual: **nes** (high studies), **nem** (average studies), **neb** (basic studies), **nse** (without any studies).
- Opinion about the hotel infrastructures in the park **Inf**, that is, if there were enough rural accommodation (hotels and houses) tabulated (1-yes) and (0-no).
- Opinion about the expectation about the park (caring for park, signposting, advertising, road infrastructures,...) **Oep**, tabulated (1-positive), (0-negative).
- infrastructures,...) **Oep**, tabulated (1-positive), (0-negative).

$$gs = 1 / (1 + e^{-(\beta_0 + \beta_1 ecc + \beta_2 ecd + \beta_3 ecs + \beta_4 eco + \beta_5 edad + \beta_6 zona + \beta_7 rf + \beta_8 nif + \beta_9 niv + \beta_{10} gr + \beta_{11} sexo + \beta_{12} dv + \beta_{13} alo + \beta_{14} bal + \beta_{15} ap + \beta_{16} nem + \beta_{17} nes + \beta_{18} nse + \beta_{19} reb + \beta_{20} re + \beta_{21} hr-cr + \beta_{22} gr + \beta_{23} inf + \beta_{24} oep)}) + \varepsilon$$

Dependent Variable GS Method ML Binary Logit (Quadratic hill climbing) Included observations 552 Convergence achieved after 11 iterations		
	Coefficient	Std. Error
Constant	B <sub>0</sub> =15.7963	3.4567
Marital status married ECC	B <sub>1</sub> =11.2565	2.5681
Marital status divorced ECD	B <sub>2</sub> =15.7963	2.1482
Marital status single ECS	B <sub>3</sub> =12.6486	1.69345
Other marital status ECO	B <sub>4</sub> = 7.3565	1.8776
AGE	B <sub>5</sub> = 0.0093	0.0017
AREA	B <sub>6</sub> =-0.3687	0.0044
Family income RF	B <sub>7</sub> =-0.5897	0.0328
Numbers of people who are in the family NIF	B <sub>8</sub> = 0.0683	0.0016
Numbers of people who were on holidays NIV	B <sub>9</sub> = 0.0256	0.0023
Expenses spent for holidays GR	B <sub>10</sub> =-0.0289	0.0011
Sex	B <sub>11</sub> = 0.4186	0.0152
Holiday days DV	B <sub>12</sub> = 0.1276	0.0917
Other accommodaties ALO	B <sub>13</sub> = 0.0152	0.0036
Spa BAL	B <sub>14</sub> = 0.5656	0.1254
Hotel AP	B <sub>15</sub> = 0.0283	0.0034
Average studies NEM	B <sub>16</sub> =12.6756	2.4891
High studies NES	B <sub>17</sub> =11.5486	1.6667
Without any studies NSE	B <sub>18</sub> =0.03254	0.0034
Basic studies NEB	B <sub>19</sub> =12.3897	0.1863
Individual World repeat experience RE	B <sub>20</sub> = 0.5368	0.0045
Hotels rurales house HR- CR	B <sub>21</sub> = 1.4633	0.3489
Expenses spent GR	B <sub>22</sub> = 0.0689	0.0062
Opinion in relation to the hotel infrastucture INF	B <sub>23</sub> = -0.5684	0.0013
Opinion in relation to the hotel infrastucture OEP	B <sub>24</sub> = 0.0335	0.0001

- $R^2_{McFadden} = 0.59$ . significant coefficients  $\alpha = 0.05$
- **Fig. 2:** Logistic Regression

Analysing the estimated model, it is deduced:

1<sup>st</sup>) Single tourists are the ones who are more satisfied in relation with their expectation about the park. It is observed by means of the coefficient B<sub>3</sub>, that is initial positive; characteristic of the male rural tourists who are single with a few days for holidays and with a family income available not very high.

2<sup>nd</sup>) Age, area individuals come from and family income variables influence negatively in relation to the park are covered.

3<sup>rd</sup>) Polled tourists consider hotel infrastructures inadequate (- 0.568426) decreasing the probability of satisfaction of the park from the secondary image, which he or she had before going in the park, to the primary image after having visited it.

4<sup>th</sup>) Polled rural tourists consider destination satisfactory, repeating the experience according to the coefficient  $B_{20} = 0.536867$ .

Considering the model estimated previously, we can conclude that hotel infrastructure supply (rural houses and rural hotels) is insufficient in some seasons during the years, and it means the demand is not satisfied and tourists look for other natural parks. Rural tourism demand is increasing and there is a high probability that a tourist repeats experience, so it is guaranteeing a necessary minimum demand that covers the costs of new investments in the rural areas. It would be created more activities of ecological tourism within the natural parks because the main user of it is a young tourist and it would generate more income the region, getting a great economic development (Choi & Murray, 2010, Castellani & Sala, 2010, Liu, 2003). However, it has to have a higher hotel places and rural houses supply, getting a sustainable tourism. It should be increased the investment in advertising of the rural tourism destination, and to control the illegal supply at the same time.

Throughout this field study, we have dealt with the identification of the main parameters that the tourist demand has nowadays.

This tourist visits a concrete rural destination and a concrete natural park in Córdoba. It suggests not only to the public agents but also the private initiative the behaviour's guidelines to be able to determine half-term trends. The recent importance of the rural tourism is undoubting and the necessity to set out correct models of tourism to avoid errors in the marketing tourist places. It leads to the necessity to determine what and how this tourist demand consumes exactly.

#### **4. Conclusions**

To conclude with this paper, we will do a brief summary about every contents explained until now. In a first section, it was set out how a rural area has to assume to be a tourist product. So, this sector can mean for the region inhabitants an additional income sources. And, with the help of public and private bodies boosting all their singularities, they can consolidate themselves a generator centre of a great part of the regional economy and as tourist destination. These areas have to adopt measures to improve the image of the area, to promote the sharing tourism where the visitants can get involved and be sharing in the life of the places (daily tasks, customs, ways of local life...), and to rescue folk activities. All these will give a degree of differentiation in relation to the rest of rural destination to the offered product and service by the area.

It is necessary for it to co-ordinate and plan any activity and tourist initiative that can generate an economic flowering.

In Andalusia, we are still on time to be the first region in supply and demand of rural tourism because time is changing quickly; markets of rural tourist destination are progressing in an increasing speed. So, companies, not only hotels but all the complementary services (area stores, craftsmen...), should anticipate to this possible demand with swiftness and precision considering a good demand estimate which helps them to do investment appropriate to the future wealth resource that they are going to receive by means of this new sector which is rural tourism.

With this paper we defend the possibility to apply the adequate measures from the public bodies (regional, national, supranational) related to rural tourism to generate wealth and to redistribute income. We consider it is possible to extrapolate the initiatives of regional politics of the European Union to correct the regional imbalances making easier the convergence between the regions, the new countries of the extension and between the developmental areas.

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