



Case study

The inter-relationship between rural and mass tourism: The case of Catalonia, Spain

Juan M. Hernández ^{a,*}, Rafael Suárez-Vega ^a, Yolanda Santana-Jiménez ^b^a Institute of Tourism and Sustainable Development (TIDES), University of Las Palmas de Gran Canaria, c/ Saulo Torón, s/n, 35017, Spain^b Department of Quantitative Methods in Economy, University of Las Palmas de Gran Canaria, c/ Saulo Torón, s/n, 35017, Spain

H I G H L I G H T S

- A comparison of the main attractions in rural and mass tourism in Mediterranean destinations is made.
- A hedonic price model is estimated for rural tourism in Catalonia.
- Recommendations for rural tourism management in Catalonia are presented.

A R T I C L E I N F O

Article history:

Received 30 October 2014

Received in revised form

28 October 2015

Accepted 28 October 2015

Available online 13 November 2015

Keywords:

Rural tourism

Sun-and-sand tourism

Mediterranean

Hedonic pricing

GIS

A B S T R A C T

In certain regions of Southern Europe, mature coastal resorts are currently coexisting with rural tourism areas several kilometers inland. This paper analyzes the inter-relationship of these two types of tourism and the conditions for sustaining both in Mediterranean destinations. To do so, common and uncommon characteristics of the tourist product in rural and mass tourism are identified. The case study focuses on the region of Catalonia, Spain. By applying a hedonic price model, the valuation of some traditional mass tourism characteristics in rural tourism is tested. The results show that rural and mass tourism in the region share several attributes, some of them with opposite effects. The general conclusion is that both types of tourism are compatible, but should be developed and promoted independently to preserve the attractiveness of the destination. Some managerial recommendations for rural tourism in Catalonia are also derived from this analysis.

© 2015 Elsevier Ltd. All rights reserved.

1. Introduction

Rural tourism has been promoted across several regions in Southern Europe as an alternative to the traditional mass tourism industry. For example, several programs, regulations and plans have been implemented in Spain (Barke, 2004), Cyprus (Sharpley, 2002), Crete (Andriotis, 2006) and other regions of Greece (Kizos & losifides, 2007). Aside from pursuing the socioeconomic revitalization in rural areas, the diversification strategy of the industry is justified by tourism, environmental and economic reasons. From the tourist-policy aspects, there is, among other motivations, a need to: a) Look for higher-spending markets which leave a higher share of economic benefits to the local inland population; b) Reduce seasonality in the tourist industry; c) Adapt the supply to an

increasing demand for destinations with high environmental quality. From an environmental perspective, the promotion of new attractions (cultural or nature-based inland) also pursued to lessen pressure on the environment in the concentrated coastal areas (Sharpley, 2002; Bramwell, 2004). Pure economic reasons can be added. Unlike the classical Ricardian theory of international trade, several contemporary economists defend that production specialization in open economies can be suboptimal if some uncertainties, such as those on trading price or technological coefficient, are high enough (Turnovsky, 1974). These kinds of uncertainties also apply to tourism-based economies in Southern Europe. Specifically, these economies are subject to global competition with other destinations in different continents and are dependent on fragile environmental conditions, which influence on price and the quality of the tourist product, respectively. Other socioeconomic problems derived from the massive affluence of visitors in limited regions (Sheng, 2011) give more arguments to support the implementation of diversification strategies in tourist areas.

* Corresponding author.

E-mail addresses: jhernandez@dmc.ulpgc.es (J.M. Hernández), rsuarez@dmc.ulpgc.es (R. Suárez-Vega), ysantana@dmc.ulpgc.es (Y. Santana-Jiménez).

Although the necessity of alternatives to sun-and-sand tourism is justified in these destinations, the suitability of rural tourism to obtain this objective needs to be analyzed in depth. Rural and sun-and-sand tourism are two branches of the same industry and share essential elements of the tourism supply. For example, the same transport facilities (flight routes, roads and so on) and other infrastructures can be used both by rural or mass tourism. Additionally, they can also share some attractions. Roberts and Hall (2001) stated that the main characteristics of rural areas are: a) Low population density; b) Rural land use; and c) Traditional rural culture. The typology of rural tourists is diverse, but these characteristics conform the main attractions of the destinations. Accordingly, Sharpley and Sharpley (1997) identify the need for peace, tranquility, high natural value and unspoilt scenery, but also the enjoyment of traditional culture and gastronomy as the main motivations to visit the countryside. Regarding mass tourism, empirical studies carried out in Mediterranean Europe have discovered that, although the main valued attributes of the coastal destinations are still those traditionally related to sun-and-sand tourism (climate, beach, scenery and accommodation quality), other factors such as cultural events, heritage and low congestion are also identified as positive attractions of these destinations (Kozak, 2002; Yoon & Uysal, 2005; Alegre & Cladera, 2006; Santana-Jiménez & Hernández, 2011; Farmaki, 2012). Therefore, since both types of tourism take place in close geographical areas and share some of the elements of the tourist supply, the success of rural tourism in these destinations can be affected (favored or hindered) by the presence of mass tourism and vice versa.

The activities that beach and rural tourists do at the destination are not clearly compartmentalized either. Specifically, coastal tourists can take day-trips into the hinterland. This phenomenon has been observed in some destinations around the globe (Getz, 1998) and particularly in Southern Europe (Farmaki, 2012). In the latter case, the coastal tourists can represent a large proportion of the total visitors to hinterland areas. The influence of these trips to rural areas has not been analyzed in depth in the scientific literature. Some studies stress the economic benefits to rural areas in islands with mass tourism resorts on their coasts (Kizos & Iosifides, 2007), but frequent visits from beach destination to rural areas can be accompanied by noise pollution and disturbances of rural life, thus harming the rural tourist product. However, to the extent of the authors' knowledge, the potential amenity or disamenity of beach resorts to neighboring rural tourists is still unexplored. Nevertheless, the influence of potential visitors from rural areas to the coast may be negligible, since rural tourists would represent a small part of the total affluence to beach resorts.

The theoretical inter-relationships between the two branches of the industry described above have been formalized throughout a dynamical model proposed by Hernández and Casimiro (2012). The simulation of the model, parameterized to explain the case of tourism in some regions of Spain, foresees a strong expansion of rural tourism combined with a slight increase, or maybe decrease in some cases, of traditional mass tourism.

This study analyses the question of coexistence of rural tourism with coastal mass tourism in regions of Southern Europe where long-developed beach resorts are present. The analysis is conducted by comparing the main attractions of mass and rural tourism in a specific region of Southern Europe. By doing so, common links between both branches of the industry are identified, which allow for the exploration of positive and negative influences of one tourist sector on the other. As an additional result of the analysis, some promotional recommendations are proposed to allow for the sustainability of both types of tourism throughout time.

The identification of the kind of inter-relationship between the

two types of tourism has relevant management implications. Thus, the recognition of complementary factors between mass and rural tourism underpins designing promotional campaigns that present both destinations as a whole. Nevertheless, other inter-dependences which result in a benefit of one sector to the detriment of the other should be avoided or dampened. Additionally, the exclusive attractions of rural tourism supply should be enhanced in contrast to those factors which exert a major influence on coastal tourism. Private rural stakeholders can use this information to invest in inland regions which are endowed with many rural tourism attributes and enhance the characteristics of their rural houses which differentiate them from coastal tourism.

The analysis will be conducted in two steps. Firstly, the major determinants and attractions in both rural and sun-and-sand tourism in Mediterranean Europe, found by means of the application of hedonic pricing models, will be reviewed. Secondly, a case study is presented, which is devoted to tourism in Catalonia, Spain. Coastal (mass) tourism in this region started in the 60s and since the 80s rural tourism has increased in importance. A hedonic price model was built and applied to rural tourism in Catalonia. The econometric specification includes some common attributes of the two types of tourism found in the previous analysis. The estimation of parameters is carried out using spatial econometrics and geographically weighted regression. The latter is a GIS econometric methodology which allows for the weight measure of each attribute according to the geographical location of the rural house. By using this technique, the role of the attributes is identified locally, as opposed to the common econometric approach which obtains aggregated results.

2. Attributes in sun-and-sand and rural tourism in the Mediterranean area

Hedonic pricing models assume that a product is composed of a bundle of characteristics which are implicitly valued by the market and added to the final price of the product. Thus, the price p of the product (for example, a night in a hotel room) can be described by the hedonic function $p = f(x_1, x_2, \dots, x_k)$, where x_i represents the level or amount of characteristic i (e.g. square meters of the room), $i = 1, 2, \dots, k$. The term k represents the number of characteristics of the product that are valued by the market. Once the expression of function f is known (or estimated), the implicit price of the characteristics (p_i) is obtained by mathematical derivation of the hedonic function, that is, $p_i = \partial p / \partial x_i$, $i = 1, 2, \dots, k$. The economic fundamentals of the hedonic pricing methodology were developed by Rosen (1974).

In this section, the most common significant attributes of the sun-and-sand and rural tourism in Southern Europe found in the recent literature by applying hedonic price models are reviewed. Several considerations need to be made before presenting the results:

- a) First, the attributes included in these hedonic pricing models represent attractions, services, facilities and information which compound the supply side of the tourist system. So, they represent destination-specific or supply-side factors, which make the tourist choose the destination, as opposed to other demand-side factors, such as income, time available or other socio-cultural factors, which are not taken into account by means of this methodology. For the sake of comparison, specific characteristics found by each particular reference are grouped into general attributes (e.g. the availability of a parking site, breakfast included and tennis court, among others, are grouped into the attribute *Services&Facilities*).

Download English Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/en/article/7421586>

Download Persian Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/article/7421586>

[Daneshyari.com](https://daneshyari.com)