

COMPETITIVENESS AND INNOVATION OF RURAL TOURISM IN THE REGION OF MURCIA¹

María Dolores Ponce Sánchez

Escuela de Turismo adscrita a la Universidad de Murcia.
maponce@um.es

The Region of Murcia has managed to consolidate a rural/interior tourism product which has grown not only quantitatively, but also on quality parameters, thirty two of the forty-five municipalities offer 3,100 places in houses. It's an economic function to consider their contribution of additional income, their ability to cope with the challenges of sustainability and their potential to contribute to the output of the current economic and financial crisis. The tourism sector is one of the best to respond to this difficult economic situation, surprisingly by the statistics of the Ministry of Culture and Tourism they show a positive trend, though minimal in its contribution to Regional GDP in the last three years. This data confirms that there is a potential that shouldn't be dismissed and requires effective action because among the rural lodging business it shows a loss of demand, an emphasis on the seasonality and the need for lower prices to maintain minimum occupancy. It is worth stressing the importance of endogenous roles that offer interesting additional income and which stands today as the main engine for generating an extraordinary mainstream at different spatial scales (Andrew, 2000). The difficult situation is common in our immediate environment and they are taking action in most of the local administrations. Given this complex context, there are several hypotheses that emerge from this research: What actions are being undertaken to overcome this situation? Do they address the rapid changes in an increasingly competitive market? Are they able to mobilize local synergies conducive to integrated development? Academic institutions call for ways to increase the competitiveness, sustainability and excellence in destinations and products, and endorse that innovation and value is a key factor to achieve these objectives. Spain, during its fifth president in the Council of the European Union, stressed the importance of tourism as an engine of development and to contribute to inducing effect on this serious situation, so the objective in this area is to get "a socially responsible tourism model, "noting that its main components should be: sustainability, innovation and information technologies and

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communication. Also in Europe the new Framework Program for Competitiveness and innovation is the purpose of giving greater coherence to programs and instruments aimed at achieving the objectives of economic growth and job creation in the Lisbon Strategy. Finally numerous investigations, according to teachers Guzman and Martinez (2008) point to the company renovating the major component of the innovation system, while demanding a better scientific understanding of this type of organization (Stern et al., 1999; Buesa, 2001; Baumert and Heijs, 2002). Therefore, if you want to promote this attitude, first you have to obtain diagnostics to assist in the decision-making processes and actions in this sector. Therefore, our units of analysis are the preferred promoters of this activity, the owners or managers of rural houses, a family-type business structure, which are testimony to reveal both the degree of innovation that offers this product and their attitude to such value, factors that determine the competitive ability to generate regional benefits and address the changing economy in a highly competitive global market. This is the double objective of this research. To obtain this information used for personal interviews, a technique not exempt from difficulties but has yielded 52 completed interviews of the group mentioned that give us the known situation of innovation of twenty percent of the positions offered in the Region, as well as the appraisal on the matter declared in the attitudes and opinions. Participation has yielded critical information for setting and agreeing on the rural tourism product that is desired. The paper has been divided into two sections. First, interest in finding out the type of innovation that has been implemented in the past three years and views on the obstacles of these initiatives, second, to decipher the attitude towards this value is essential to know which relationships are maintained with other actors, this interaction brings about a learning process that leads to ideas, without knowledge there is no inventiveness. The information obtained reveals a product very heterogeneous in terms of quality and provision of equipment and services. While advances in this area have been remarkable, still significant qualitative differences coexist in identifying entrepreneurs themselves, so they demand government intervention to unify criteria. This situation is not conducive to the destination's image and adversely affects their competitiveness. The cause, according to the study and the perception of respondents, is a lack of coordination between administrative scales and a lack of interrelationships between all regional actors that bring about: limited actions in research, training, mobility, knowledge ...