

ECONOMIC DYNAMISM OF TOURISM ON LOCAL SCALE. AN APPROACH THROUGH LATENT CLASSES ANALYSIS

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During last years, tourism destination has awakened interest among the studies related to economic planning of tourism, from a mesoeconomic point of view, specially. Candela and Figini (2010) highlight the evolution of the interest in tourism destination from a scientific perspective, given that, until recently, all studies were focused on microeconomic dimension or macroeconomic additions, setting aside the tourism destination analysis to the mere container of products and/or services.

Authors as Saraniemi y Kylanen (2011) or Pearce (2014) explain tourism destination must is a key concept which must be understood by all agents involved in planning and management of tourism, given that its definition is a critical element for several reasons. That is, conceptualization of tourism destination term will have an impact on setting out and dealing with problems, will shape the design and methodology of the investigation and it will have influence the discoveries interpretation. Furthermore, several authors point to tourism destinations constitute the appropriated unit of analysis for tourism investigation (Blasco et al., 2014).

Although, as Pulido-Fernández y Pulido Fernández (2013:179) point to, “a destination is not just a territory where exist a combination of agents coordinated and organized, involved in production and providing a tourism product. What really get positioned in the potential costumers’ collective imaginary as the territory where to enjoy a memorable experience.

Everything said until here justifies the necessity of studying the tourism destination from a mesoeconomic perspective linked to the endogenous development, with the purpose of studying the economic impact of tourism in a territory and, hence, being able to segment the types of territories per the influence of their economic dynamism of tourism (EDT). Hence, the proposed study is focused in Andalucía, one Spanish region with of largest touristic relevance.

To verify the hypothesis, work will be done with a combination of variables that allow select and segment Andalucía's towns in groups, attending their EDT during a 15 years' period. In this way, an Andalusian towns classification will be obtained through their EDT.

In this context, it is established as hypothesis of this investigation that is possible to analyse the economic dynamism of tourism at a local scale by a combination of economic variables linked to the tourism destinations supply and, stemming from here, to segment this tourism destinations based on their EDT.

This segmentation that allows for knowing the dynamic character of any tourism destination, will be very useful for future investigations to discover to what extent the fact that a town is more dynamic from a tourism point of view favour the local development processes, what demonstrate that tourism is an important tool for the development.

The used methodology to segment the 769 inspections (belonging to the Andalusian towns with more than 3.000 inhabitants) that have been considered in this article is denominated Latent Classes Analysis. The Latent Classes Analysis (Lazarsfeld and Henry, 1968), also known as normal component mix or latent discriminatory analysis, is a statistic methodology to classify in groups of similar objects which are not known in advance nor the number of groups nor the shape of each one of them. Shape refers to the parameters of the group, which means, its average, its variance and its covariance.

As a result of the analysis, three groups of observations have been obtained which have been characterized at a statistic and geometric level. Besides, an alternative characterization has been given to the groups depending of the EDT of each town that form them.

The obtained results allow for validating the established hypothesis at the beginning of this research. At a local scale and with the EDT indicators used, the groups of towns have been segmented based on their EDT. Consequently, is possible to know the dynamic character of any destination and, from that, to apply different tourism politics based on the tourism destination level of dynamism. It is also possible to know the contribution of tourism to the endogenous or local development to demonstrate that tourism is a useful tool to the local socio-economic development and, therefore, measures to plan and manage the tourism activity should be inserted in any kind of public politic.

This work has given an Andalusian towns classification, establishing which are the most common areas and what do territories respond to with a certain level of EDT and those towns that are not classified inside the groups.

This classification has also allowed for demonstrating that the territories, which have suffered a minor transformation in the analysed period, are not necessary places where tourism is not a relevant activity, quite the opposite, places where investment and employment creation capacity in tourism has been so limited, deducing a necessity of applying a management improvement and investments to improve the tourism activity.

In relation to dynamic towns or highly towns from a touristic point of view, the influence of factors such as the placement of the already said territories, the tourism services supply and the employment generated by this activity are the variables which have conditioned this classification.

According to the conceptual approximation and the literature review carried out in this article, is possible to conclude the similarities with the approximation mesoeconomic to destination where tourism influence areas suppose a great support and value generation in

nearby territories, reaching the networks and relationships mentioned from a theoretical perspective. Hereafter, the industrial district and cluster concept in the tourism topic begins to make sense where the dynamism based on the pentagon model find its application although, in a partial way, with the development of towns segmentation through their EDT.

It also must be noted that, from a system point of view and social constructions, this vision can understand and analyse the resultant destination from the previously classifications as entities formed by persons and institutions that perform a certain task giving added value to the existing resources that award an attractive to a territory. Thus, the human component, not just in theory but in practice, must be studied and enhanced.

The same theoretical and methodological approximation verify the possible application of tourism politics to plan, manage and control a tourism destination, with the aim of making it more sustainable, providing it with better infrastructures, meet the governance requirements, generate a know-how and exclusive tacit knowledge in managing the destination to make it unique and emphasise its singularity and, finally, develop an auxiliary services framework to allow a perfect development of cooperation and competition networks among business as essential condition of tourism development at mesoeconomic scale.

This article outline a great utility about tourism politics differentiation in groups of towns, which allow a largest flexibility and an analysis more accurate in applying the already stated politics.

It also must be considered that the economic crisis stage has concerned the obtained results, so it is convenient to set out the same analysis with updated data, once the statistics sources allow that update.

It must emphasize as important note that it has been impossible to measure all dimensions which characterise the tourism destination due to the inexistence of disaggregated data of the variables that form these dimensions at a local scale. Therefore, one of proposal to work with in the future, stemming from this analysis, is the construction of an indicators system that allow for elaborating a factorial analysis that lead to a synthetic indicator of tourism destination, at the same time.

One step beyond and, therefore, a future line of research, would be to study the identified segments in a more detailed way, which will allow for identifying the factors that encourage or hinder the dynamism of the destination from a tourism point of view and, definitively, the mentioned segments explain the belonging of the already stated territories to the groups that have been revealed by this analysis.

