

## TRAVELING WITH TRADITION: ARTISANAL FISHERMEN AND FISHING TOURISM IN VALENCIAN REGION (SPAIN)

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The socio-environmental crisis that traditional fishing in the Mediterranean is experiencing, with significant economic and cultural costs, is stimulating the search for alternatives that reconcile the survival of artisanal fishing, with a strong roots in coastal populations, with the necessary environmental sustainability. To achieve this reconciliation and from an ecosystem approach to natural resource management, different initiatives are being promoted, such as “environmentally-oriented tourism” or “cooperative tourism”.

In this context, the fishing tourism is destined to become increasingly important. On the one hand, we find a traditional fishing sector in deep social, environmental and economic crisis; On the other hand, sharing territory and resources, we find a world-leading tourism sector which seeks to renew itself and avoid a very mature and standardized model of sun and beach.

The potential synergies between tourism and fishing have not gone unnoticed for fishermen, neither for the administration nor for the tourism sector. The European Union promotes an ecosystem vision for Integrated Maritime Policy (IPM) and points out fishing-tourism as one of the axes to achieve a more sustainable fishing. These synergies also imply concrete implementation within the Integrated Coastal Zone Management (ICZM) strategy. However, even among the European countries with the greatest tourism potential, the development of fishing-tourism is still at an embryonic stage and, in any case, very irregular. Countries like Italy or France were pioneers in its implantation whereas other countries, like Spain, had explicitly prohibited to embark tourists until not very long ago.

Many fishing tourism activities represent a new proposal that responds to the necessary diversification of both fishing and tourism. On the one hand, regarding tourism, it is undoubtedly in a time of structural changes as a result of the emergence of new technologies and lifestyles. A new third-generation or neo-Fordist tourism model is being introduced, characterized by a greater control of planning by the client, a decrease in

intermediaries, the importance of the experience in front of the destination and a greater emphasis on quality and sustainability. The main Spanish tourist destinations (including, of course, is the Valencian Community) have made significant efforts to adapt to these changing trends through innovative initiatives.

As for fishing, the current system is plunged into a deep crisis not only economic but also ecological and social. The European Union itself recognizes the failure of its Common Fisheries Policy and has proposed a reform that aims to give greater prominence to the sector itself in an organized way. Among other measures, Brussels proposes to incorporate the biological, economic and social dimensions of fisheries, a greater role for regional institutions and a strengthening of fishermen's organizations with the aim of playing a decisive role in planning the fishing activities.

With this in mind, the European Fisheries Fund (EFF), as established by Regulation (EC) No 1198/2006 of 27 July 2006, sought to finance a restructuring of the sector and marks as one of its five priorities the "sustainable development of fisheries areas", supporting "measures and initiatives aimed at diversifying and enhancing economic development in areas affected by the decline of fishing activities". Fishing tourism can play an important role in this sense although there are still many issues to consider and many questions that arise. In addition to legal uncertainty, a more widespread implementation of this activity faces problems related to the irregular distribution of infrastructures, lack of monitoring of projects, barriers that regulation may impose or fishermen's lack of experience and training.

It is these last two obstacles, regulation and training, directly related to the people who develop the activity, which this work examines from the fishermen perceptions. Focusing on the Valencian Community, the proposed analysis focuses its attention on a basic question: the perception - and, therefore, the provision - that the fishermen and their institutions, the *Cofradías*, have about fishing-tourism. The causes of trust or distrust they deserve, the opportunities they perceive and the misgivings that this activity causes them.

To that end, a qualitative methodology has been chosen from 32 semi-structured interviews with fishermen, all of whom are ship's skippers, and guild's secretaries of the ports of Jávea, Denia, Gandia, Castellón, Cullera, Calpe, Sagunto and Vinaroz (Valencian Community). Direct interaction with these key informants has made it possible to clarify, deepen and analyze information that is difficult to access from the scarce existing literature.

The interviews, of approximately 45 minutes duration, plus a series of general questions about personal information (age, years practicing as fisherman, fishing gear ...) were focused on the inshore fishing problems, its relations with the different administrations, as well as their knowledge and vision (difficulties, conditions, viability ...) of fishing-tourism.

All the interviews carried out in 2015 were recorded and transcribed to be codified using Atlas.ti5, which facilitated the grouping of citations and codes as well as the creation of families and networks. The collected discourses were analyzed from specific discourse analysis techniques to reveal both the direct information, and the latent presuppositions and the discursive strategies employed. It is intended to provide a framework for understanding from the perspective of the social group we are investigating, as well as provide a detailed exposition of a unique scenario -the possible relationship between coastal fisheries and tourism-.

This and other previous studies indicate that the traditional fisherman does not reject the introduction of fishing tourism. In fact, the surveys carried out by the Sagital Project 1 indicated levels of acceptance of this activity by the cofradías ranging from 91% in 2007 to 100% acceptance in 2012.

These quantitative data are confirmed by our qualitative analysis. The Valencian fisherman has lived with tourism for many years, has shared territory and ports, there have been certain relations of conflict or collaboration. Even between tourism and fishing there has been a continuous flow of workers. Therefore, tourism is not a foreign world for the fisherman.

Fishing-tourism is generally accepted by fishermen and not only for the possibility of providing additional income, but above all for the possibility it entails to publicize and value their culture, work and product. The fisherman continuously expresses the feeling of being a separate community and willingly agrees that others can embark, know and value their activity and product. With this, he not only tries to break the topics around him, he also hopes that it will end up being reflected in the demand and price of the fish.

It can therefore be concluded that any attempt to implement an efficient and sustainable management of fishing-tourism will take advantage of the existing social capital in these communities, integrating the fishermen into a new co-management model. As fishing tourism will necessarily be carried out by fishermen, they must be (and their institutions, the Cofradías) the protagonists of its design and implementation. These conclusions on fishing-tourism are very much in line with what should be in general the fisheries management.

This work has been focused on analyzing the vision of the fishermen on fishing-tourism. Although the study is limited in a very specific region, we believe that its reflections and conclusions can be extended to many other parts of the world.