

## EXTENDED ABSTRACT

# THE DEVELOPMENT OF MARINE TOURISM IN SPAIN: REGIONAL DIFFERENCES

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### 1. INTRODUCTION

Fishing in Spain is a historical activity, rich in traditions, which plays an important role from an economic and sociocultural point of view. Since time immemorial, the fishing sector has been one of the main sources of wealth for Spanish coastal towns. However, in recent decades, as a result of the development of tourism, this activity has been relegated to the background.

The tourist offer in Spain has been based on the modality of sun and beach (García and Albuquerque, 2003), especially on the Mediterranean facade, where numerous hotels, apartments and pensions have been built but, above all, thousands of homes that they are acquired as second homes (Huete, 2008). In other words, mass tourism is practiced (Coll and Seguí, 2014) with a pronounced summer seasonality.

A good part of the Spanish sun and beach destinations, following the theory of the life cycle of tourist destinations by Butler (1980), are in a phase of stagnation and even decline, mainly due to the loss of attractiveness and the new motivations (Heitmann, 2011). Therefore, in recent years, there is an important trend to diversify the offer (Ivars *et al.*, 2013; Benur and Bramwell, 2015), promoting innovative products through plans for the renovation of the destination, a possible reorientation of the model and the redefinition of the model and the redefinition of the brand image (Vera and Baños, 2016). It is intended to achieve greater competitiveness through quality products that attract new tourists. That is, quantity is not sought so much but distinction, incorporating elements related to the landscape or local identity (González and Anton, 2016).

Fishing activity is one of the traditional economic sectors in Spain, being present in each of the Spanish Autonomous Communities with a coastline (Roselló, 1986; Salvà, 1987; Molinero, 1993; Lois, 2001). Although the number of vessels and, therefore, the number of assets in the sector, is not distributed in a homogeneous way, all of them bear a common similarity, which is none other than the predominance of coastal or coastal fishing through the fleet of lowland (Moreno, 2018). Currently, Spain is the leading producer of fish in the European Union, according to data from the Spanish Fisheries Sector Report (2019). However, there is a regressive trend in recent decades regarding the number of ships and workers, derived from social, political, economic and biological factors. In

others words, the fishing communities are facing new challenges as a consequence of this decline (Miret-Pastor *et al.*, (2018), which is why the activity is sought to be revitalized and new complementary income is sought to improve the situation (Gràcia, 2016)

Marine tourism is being promoted in different coastal in different coastal areas of the world (Kauppila and Karjalainen, 2012; Pérez and Espejo, 2012), especially in the most touristy countries such as Spain (Miret-Pastor *et al.*, 2019), That is, it seeks to unite the fishing and tourism activities. This fact, according to Martínez and Moreno (2014), is motivated by the complex situation in the traditional fishing sector, plunged into a crisis due, among other factors to the lack of workers, the withdrawal of vessels and the harsh of the trade, and the search for new competitive singularities to attract a greater number of tourist. It is worth mentioning that this tourism modality includes activities on land (gastronomic tastings, visits to fish markets and port facilities, knot workshops or guided routes by heritage elements that are directly or indirectly related to fishing) and in the sea (visualization of the fishing day), which is known as fishing-tourism (Moreno, 2018). Therefore, as Herrera-Racionero *et al.* (2018) state, these are novel proposals that respond to the need for diversification of fishing and tourism activity. However, as indicated by Caamaño *et al.* (2021), it cannot be said that marine tourism is a complementary means of income for the fishing sector since, for the most part, the companies involved are tourism. However, the work they do in order to enhance maritime culture is unquestionable and with their work they are favoring the conservation and promotion of fishing and all its culture.

According to Jiménez (2016), coastal populations can be considered as “fishing”, since they live with a different identity due to the fact that a large part of their cultural elements have a marine influence. In this sense, the basic pillar on which marine tourism is developed is the tangible and intangible fishing cultural heritage, which can be used as a tourist resource (Moreno, 2018). That is to say, in these territories there is an authentic simple of living traditions worthy of knowing first hand. This type of tourism pursues various objectives: i) Obtaining new economic income by the ship owners; ii) Achieve a socioeconomic benefit for the places where it is developed; and iii) To evaluate and make known everything that concerns the maritime culture of the coastal populations.

In Spain, marine tourism has been promoted for more than a decade through Fishermen’s Guilds, private companies, town councils and GALP (Local Fisheries Action Groups). That is, it takes a short journey (Pardellas and Espejo, 2013), so it can be considered as a novel activity (Miret-Pastor *et al.*, (2015). However, there seems to be a clear predisposition of all of them so that this tourist modality becomes a new product that complements the traditional model of sun and beach and new competitive singularities are achieved.

## 2. OBJECTIVES

Given that marine tourism has become a development opportunity for coastal towns with a maritime tradition, the approach arises of undertaking an investigation that investigates the current situation of this tourism modality in Spain. The fundamental objective that guides the research is to know the differences between the Autonomous Communities. To do this, it is necessary to study the existing legislative contrasts at the national and

regional level in fisheries matters and investigate the different marine tourism initiatives offered in each of the Spanish regions.

### **3. METHODOLOGY**

For the elaboration of this research, an exhaustive bibliographic review about marine tourism has been carried out, in the first place, in order to prepare an adequate introduction and theoretical framework. Next the current national and regional laws on fishing have been studied to find out the differences between them, and, finally, they have been compiled through various means (specialized literature and web pages of the public administration and of tour operators) the possibilities offered by each of the Autonomous Communities as regards this modality.

### **4. RESULTS**

The boost in marine tourism in Spain in the last decade has led to substantial changes in fishing legislation. This fact is given especially by one of the activities that this tourism modality encompasses, fishing tourism. For its proper development, a legal framework appropriate to the circumstances is necessary, for which various Spanish Autonomous Communities have modified their fishing laws, in order to achieve a diversification of the sector and carry out fishing-tourism under the best possible conditions.

It is necessary to clarify that in this section of the investigation the autonomous fishing laws are addressed in the first instance. The reason is simple, some Autonomous Communities included sections referring to fishing-tourism and marine tourism before state legislation. In this sense, both the regional and national laws present differences.

Marine tourism has a very short journey in Spain, limited to just over a decade if the creation of museum spaces on fishing activity is taken into account. The presence of this type of tourism has been found in practically all the Spanish coastal Autonomous Communities, except for the Canary Island. The number of initiatives is in continuous progression, which shows that there is a predisposition on the part of the actors involved (public administration, fishermen's associations, ship owners and private companies) to value the maritime culture. In other words, it offers a complementary and alternative tourism product to sun and beach tourism typical of coastal areas.

### **5. CONCLUSION**

Regarding the introduction of marine tourism, it is interesting to note that regional contrasts are evident. Galicia is the territory where this tourism modality has developed the most, since it was the first to promote it through various local development projects. However, in recent years it has taken off with some force in other places such as Catalonia or Andalusia. Among the activities that are offered the most are the guided routes that allow to know heritage elements related to fishing and attendance at the fish auction, present in most of the Autonomous Communities, and the tasting of seafood, which implies the recovery of food traditions and a diffusion of the local gastronomy. These

have been consolidated in many Spanish localities, which shows that there is an interest of the population in this type of initiative. In addition, it is necessary to mention the increase in museums or interpretation centers on fishing, since it tries to safeguard the fishing cultural heritage, tangible and intangible, formed throughout history and that has left a great mark on coastal areas. On the other hand, fishing-tourism is only present in 6 Autonomous Communities (Andalusia, Galicia, Catalonia, Valencian Community, Balearic Island and the Murcia Region), since to date the lack of a legal framework in the rest of the Spanish coastal regions. However, this is remedied, as mentioned in the upper lines, with the Royal Decree approved in April 2019. This activity is usually complemented with a gastronomic tasting and with attendance at the fish auction, so in addition to the ship owners, fishermen's guilds and the hotel sector benefit from it.

In short, marine tourism has been consolidating in recent years in Spain as a complement and/or alternative to the traditional sun and beach tourism typical of coastal areas, taking advantage of its already consolidated synergies. The public administration, fishermen's guilds, ship owners and private initiatives have tried to value heritage, tangible and intangible elements, linked to the world of fishing, which are largely unknown to a large part of society. Finally, despite not developing with the same intensity in all Autonomous Communities, the number of initiatives continues to increase, an unequivocal sign that this tourism modality does not go unnoticed in the search for sustainable development of both the fishing sector and the territory where it is practice.