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Sustainable Tourism in Aragon, a Case of a Spanish Inside Region

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1. Introduction

This chapter is a descriptive analysis of tourism in Aragon, as a study case of an interior Spanish touristic region. The study shows the tourism profile in Aragon, showing that are some needs in tourism promotion as well as a description presented with latest data that shows the huge amount of natural and cultural/historical resources that can be exploited to improve the actual economy of this Spanish region.

Methodologically, this research is based on primary data by means of a survey to tourists visiting Aragon in 2009, as well as all the secondary literature that are referenced.

This study is an approach to the theoretical framework of the “sustainability paradigm” where economic, social and environmental aspects are considered.

2. Methodology

An *ad hoc* survey was constructed to know visitors profile of the demand. Due to the diverse types of tourism that visit Aragon during the year, Holy Week holidays in 2009 were selected to pass the questionnaire because during this time, all groups can be included.

One of the main targets of the survey about tourism was knowing the reason for travelling to Aragon and how do they have known about this destination. Sociodemographic profile, level of expenses and the way of planning and manage their travel were other topics treated. All this items were validated by a final and open question about general satisfaction of the stay and the quality level of the services obtained.

The sample was stratified and random selected among the tourist collective visiting Aragon in 2009, more precisely during Easter Eve. A stratified sample ($n = 3325$ respondents), was large enough as to present a minimum error margin ($e = \pm 2\%$), where the reliability reaches a high score (Person's $r = .95$).

IBM SPSS Statistics 19.0 (2010) has been used for processing all the questionnaires.

In order to avoid the interviewer's selection bias, random systematic sample was applied, ignoring respondents' personal like or dislike.

This research has used an exhaustive secondary sources study on fact-finding collated from previous studies on general tourism and tourism in Aragon.

3. Tourist profile in Aragon

The profile of incoming tourists suggests a domestic origin, mostly from large nearest cities, Barcelona, Valencia and Madrid, consolidating proximity tourism. The average profile is a middle-aged adult (31 to 40 years) with a high level of education, as Fig. 1 shows, there is relation between type of tourism and training level, culture and religion are the drivers for graduates and postgraduates. The general tendency of higher educational levels in an informational and complex society allows to increase tourism in an inside region as Aragon with the following motivations: snow, rural tourism, fairs & conferences, active sports, health & wellness.

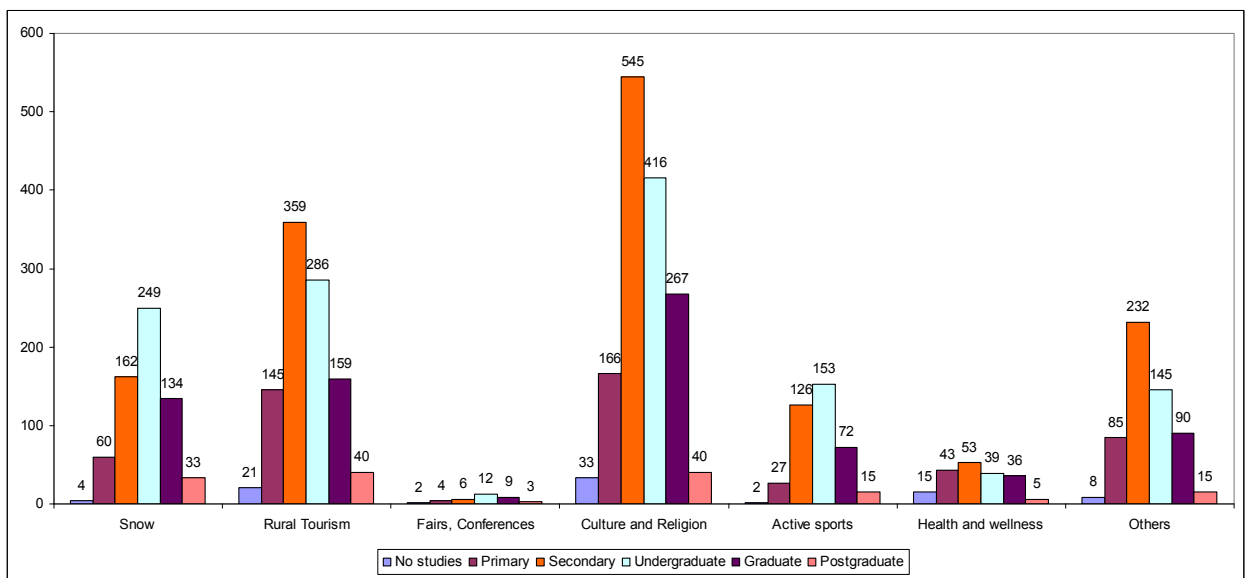


Fig. 1. Type of tourism sorted by training level

This kind of tourist travels in company of his family, partner and friends (Fig. 2) for a period between 3 and 7 days, staying in 1 to 3 stars hotels. Another type of accommodation chosen by them is secondary residences, relatives and friends’ houses, and different options on rural tourism (Fig. 3).

Family and friends relationships are special transversal issues in these experiences mainly based on human communication, where the quiet atmosphere of the environment is a crucial factor. From the supply point of view, a close companion likes family and friends, besides a small and familiar accommodation consolidate tourism.

These visitors organize their own tour package based on direct information collected from their friends and internet. The higher training level more self confidence and autonomy gives to organize travels (Fig. 4). Internet has meant a revolution in travel & tourism as well as other social and economical conventions. An attractive and well positioned webpage and Social Media Market networks can make a remote region visible and accessible worldwide (Sanagustin et al, 2011).

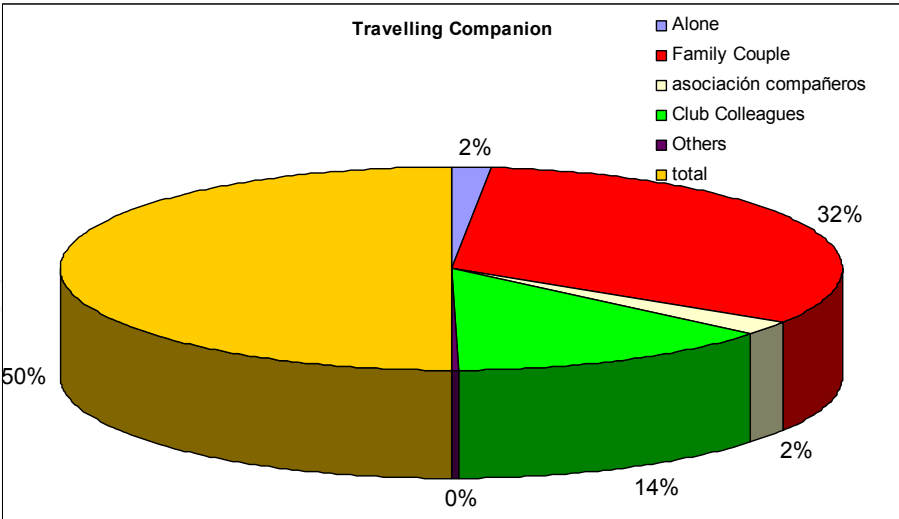


Fig. 2. Travelling companion

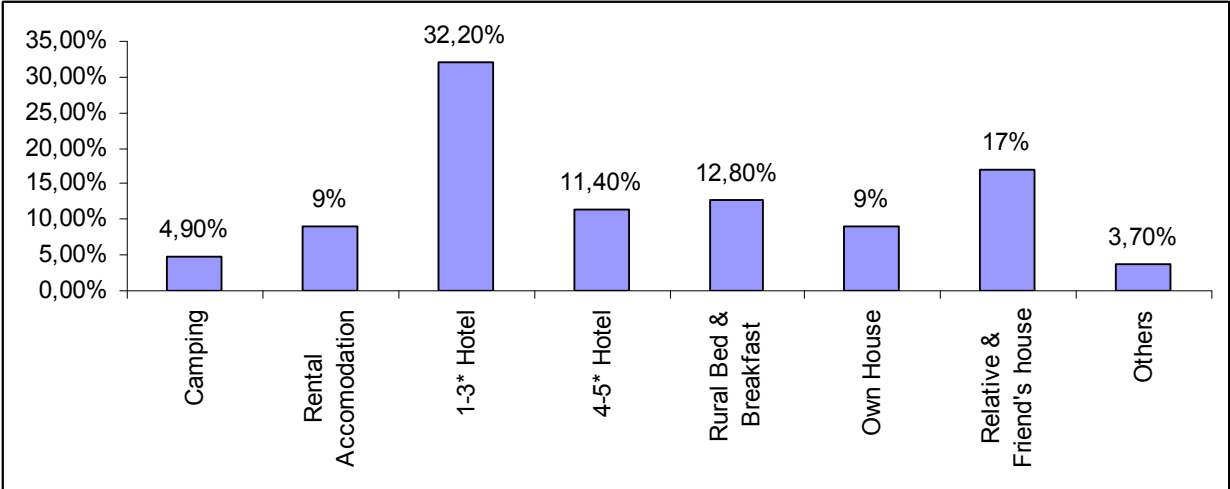


Fig. 3. Stay and type of accommodation

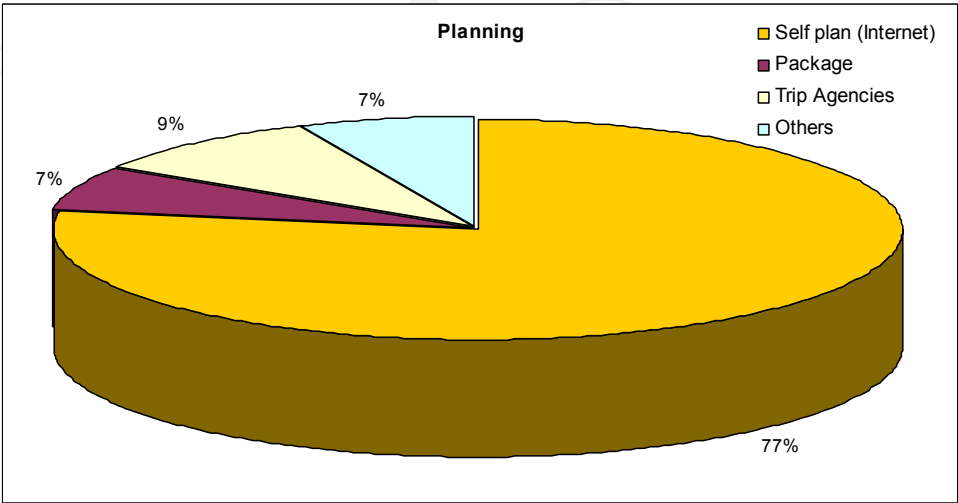


Fig. 4. Travel Planning

The expenses range is between 30 and 60 Euros per day, excluding accommodation, whereas local food consumption, typical souvenirs and nightlife are the major portion of them. Diary expenses depict a medium class that wants to go out but contending expenses, this is the actual situation in Spain (Exceltur, 2010). Following this fig. 5 shows that the expenses in pubs and bars are the main ones for young people (21-30). This prevalence, changes in the next range, where lunch and dinner gain importance. The wide gastronomy offered in Aragon, as a result of several regional promotion plans, drives most of expenses towards restaurants and bars which are composing one of the most typical leisure activities in Spain.

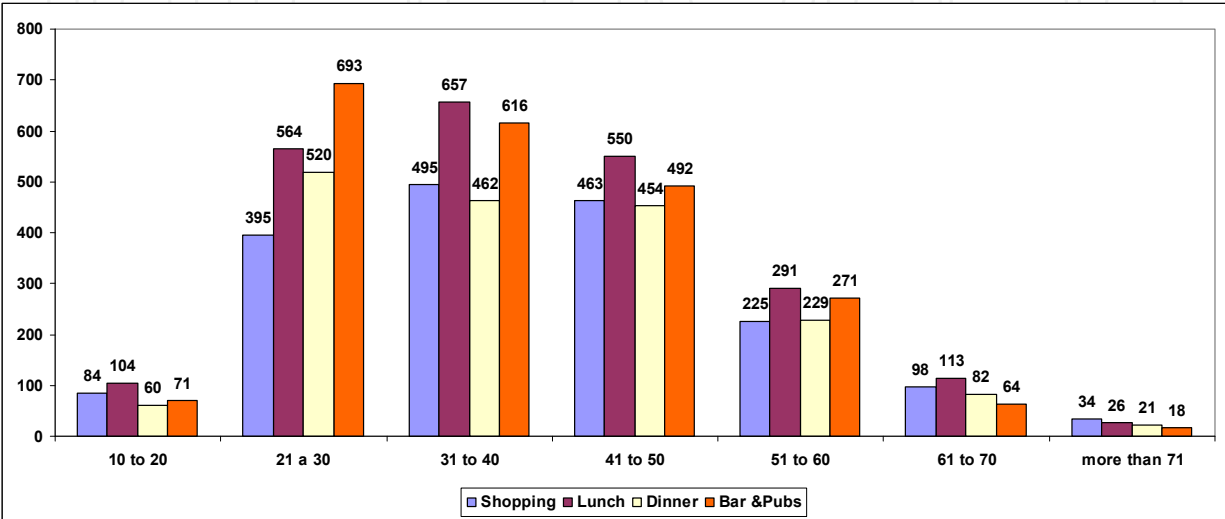


Fig. 5. Consumption sorted by age.

Finally, active tourists express a "very satisfactory" experience, near "excellent" which suggests their intention to return; this confirms empirical results obtained in other inside and rural tourism in Europe (Monge and Brandimarte, 2011; Govers et al, 2008). Nowadays tourism is based on the satisfaction of the experiences, emotional impacts and the search of new sensations. Besides this, accessibility, marketing and tourists’ perception and expectative gives the basic lines to draw it as a tourist destination (Anton and González, 2008).

4. Descriptive analysis and diagnosis of the current state of tourism in Aragon (Spain)

a. Economic situation

Economic data reveal the importance that the tourism sector has been gaining over recent years in Spain. Nowadays it is 10% of GNP. Tourism is an important source of financial incomes that is reinforcing the economy in Spain. Aragon is not an exception to this point. Nowadays, governments in different countries, at any level (local, regional) are investing large amounts of money to obtain maximum benefit from tourism. Taking into account the latest contributions from the multi-disciplinary field of socio-economics, tourism has turned into a requisite necessary for efficient administration and to reach total sustainable development.

It is essential to be conscious of the financial crisis we are traversing and the potential economic source that tourism represents in the sector to become a real force for development in Aragon. In order to achieve these goals, there must be an analysis and

diagnosis of tourism in the region, from an internal and an external point of view, identifying the successful and unsuccessful actions in its promotion and management, and thus obtaining the highest rate of efficiency in both fields: promotion and management of tourism in Aragon. As mentioned before, a remarkable investment of budget and human resources is being made in Aragon by both public and private organizations. However, the results have not been as expected, or at least, not as promising as could have been expected: In 2007, Aragon stood at the top of the ten bottom regions in Spain as far as the number of journeys and guest-nights made as a final destination, but far away from the first six regions, according to the National Institute of Statistics (INE-NIS). Additionally, it is important to describe the perception of tourism existing in Aragon, as it is essential to identify the manner that the Aragonese population feel their land and resources. They should feel the pride of being "aragonian" to offer "Aragon" as a brand and tourism product and destination.

At present, the tourist sector is of prime importance for economy. In 2007, the economy in Aragon was strong, with a growth rate of 4.2% GDP at the end of the year, seven decimal points (0.7) above the national rate, and five decimal points (0.5) higher than the previous year. All sectors displayed a stronger dynamism than the national average and accelerated the growth over 2006. More specifically, the service sector increased production by a remarkable 4.6%, as stated in the report of the Economic Outlook for Aragon published by the Aragonese Economy Foundation (FUNDEAR) in March 2008. This report also pointed out that demand was boosted by strong dynamics in investment, both in capital equipment and construction, which grew 12.8% and 7.7% respectively. The Economic Report on Aragon for 2006 also states that the service sector generates about 60% of the GVA for the region. This is a key sector in the economy, not only for its current position, but for its remarkable and continuous progress in the role that has been playing during the last few decades. In addition, in terms of employment, the report confirms that the tertiary sector was the only one to generate new jobs in the region, increasing the rate in employment 6.6%, which was more than twice its rate in 2005, and beat the national average (1.5 points). Thus, employment figures reached 357,800 and the sector accounted for an increase to 62% of the total amount of jobs. The tertiary sector created 22,000 jobs, and more than compensated for falls in the other sectors, especially industry. If Aragon is divided into provinces to this point, Teruel is once again at the forefront. The number of jobs in the province of Teruel grew by 9.8%, followed by Huesca (7.3%) and finally, Zaragoza (6.1%), the province holding 77% of the service sector jobs in Aragon. At present, Aragon has an economic structure where industry has a relatively higher position than the rest of the country. However, industry going elsewhere and the economy moving towards the tertiary sector are causing a void in the economy of Aragon, which must be filled by the service sector (Gómez and Horna, 2006). The increasing importance of tourism will compensate the shortfalls in the Aragonese economy, partially, at least. This factor for development is highly localised in very specific districts and may be a key activity, especially in structuring and developing the region. The importance of tourism as a source of wealth for the development of some districts in Aragon cannot be doubted, as proved by the study of Gómez and Horna, (2006). The authors point out that the districts with most tourism achieved a higher GVA growth between 1999 and 2001. In 2001, the districts attracting tourism increased their GVA (12%), while those with less tourism grew 5.2%. There is a clear difference in the structure of the sector, with the tourist districts being geared towards the tertiary sector with less industry and agriculture.

b. Tourism amenities in Aragon

b.1. Hotels and restaurants

The most recent official statistical data available are those provided by the Government of Aragon from January 2008, which are described below, although we will first compare the data given by Franco Aliaga in his *Atlas Temático de España*, (2004:148), as it enables to overview recent trends for companies in the sector. At that time, Aragon had 7,768 accommodations and catering companies, of which 1,688 were hotels, 697 camping sites or other short-stay accommodation; 1,248 were restaurants, 5,701 bars, and 172 group dining-rooms and provision for ready-prepared meals (catering).

In January 2008, according to the *Statistical Yearbook For The Autonomic Region Of Aragon*, the figures are much higher. In general terms, there are a total of 9,036 accommodation and catering establishments in Aragon, with a capacity of 152,282 places, excluding bars.

Accommodation consists of 81,486 places, of which 20,107 are in Zaragoza, 47,044 in Huesca and 14,335 in Teruel. Therefore, Huesca is the province, by far, with the highest number of tourist amenities, doubling those of Zaragoza and tripling those of Teruel.

There are 1,772 restaurants and a larger number of cafés (5,338), while there are 6,802 bars.

The Statistical Yearbook for the Autonomic Region of Aragon of January 2008 (AECOA) also presents a division of establishments according to type, as follows: 399 Hotels; 8 Hospederías de Aragón and historic hotels; 4 National Paradors; 287 Hostels; 164 Guesthouses; 142 Tourist apartments; 81 Campsites; 10 Camping Areas; 14 Mountain Refuges and 76 Youth hostels.

The total number of stable accommodation establishments in Aragon goes up to 1004.

Rural tourism: Aragon has 977 establishments, most being in Huesca: 585, Teruel has 257 and Zaragoza has 157, the lowest rural tourism.

Ski resorts: Huesca has 6 downhill ski stations and 10 for cross-country skiing. Teruel has 2 and 1, respectively, and Zaragoza, none.

A similar pattern is found with companies specialised in activity/adventure tourism. There are 70 in Huesca, 19 in Zaragoza and 8 in Teruel, which brings the total up to 97 in Aragon.

Marina and sailing clubs: As for marina and sailing clubs, Huesca has 4: Barasona, La Sotonera, Búbal and Ligüerre de Cinca, while Zaragoza and Teruel have none, unless the Zaragoza Sailing club is counted, which is on a stretch of the River Ebro and has been re-launched recently for the Expo-Zaragoza 2008. The fishing and sailing marina on the Sea of Aragon, more specifically the Caspe Lake Campsite at Caspe, also called the Mequinenza reservoir, must be included, as it has held international fishing competitions for years, specialised in black bass, and also has an adventure water sports section.

Golf: The climate and landscape of the region in Aragon are not very inviting as far as golf courses are related, but there are some of them. Zaragoza has four: two in the area of Zaragoza, one in Calatayud and another in Pinseque. Huesca has 3, in Benasque, Aragüés and Jaca; and Teruel has two: one in Alcalá de la Selva and one in Allepuz.

Spas: Zaragoza has the first position for the number of spas. There are six in Alhama de Aragón, three in Jaraba and one in Paracuellos del Jiloca. Huesca has three: Panticosa, Valle del Turbón and Benasque; and Teruel has one in Manzanera.

Casinos: Gaming establishments or casinos are mainly based in Huesca. This province can offer more establishments than the other two provinces together. Huesca has two, one in the capital city and another in the Balneario de Panticosa, while Teruel and Zaragoza have none.

One special mention would deserve the huge project for gambling in Europe, known as *Gran Scala* and located in Ontiñena, which seems to have got off the ground in February 2009 when the company purchased the farmland required for building this international leisure complex. The effect *Gran Scala* cannot be evaluated, as it has not yet been built-up.

The figures given in the data for 2004 and 2008 have been overtaken with the appearance of hotels built in the heart of the venue Expo Zaragoza 2008 (an International Exhibition), with the aim of continuity, especially in the Zaragoza region, which, except for the capital city of Zaragoza, is the province less visited as far as tourism is related. Within the tourism sector, and obviously due to its higher population, Zaragoza has the biggest number of travel agencies: 174 spread all across the province, although most of these are in the city of Zaragoza; Huesca has 35 and Teruel, 12.

However, it would seem logical to foresee that, once that the boom of Expo-Zaragoza is over, attracting people to visit and stay in Aragon in the hotels would mean providing reasons and contents for the stay. In this sense, the three provinces of Aragon have their points of interest in several areas, totally different and with their own style, as described below.

b.2. Hospederías de Aragón - historic hotels

This network was partly created following the tourism model for the National Paradors (Paradores de España) of Spain, or Pousadas in Portugal. Both are unique buildings in wonderful landscapes, well-known for their history or scenic views (or both) that have been restored to create a quality tourism asset in Aragon, with an Aragonese identity that preserves a large part of the traditions and culture of Aragon. Unlike the National Paradors, these hotels are run privately, and therefore, are very different, depending on the hotel and the person/company in charge of it and the corresponding management style. Some of them have radically changed their management and results over their short lifespan.

This historic hotels network consists of a series of hotels in buildings of architectural interest, mainly in the countryside, which have been renovated to provide quality accommodation and services to areas with a high potential for tourism where the existing infrastructure for tourism is scarce or non-existing. At the same time, they are ensuring that the buildings will be used and cared in the future, which means that jobs will be created and maintained.

Given that the very nature of these Hospederías de Aragón (historic hotels) network makes them clearly outstanding from other hotels, the rest of the hotels throughout Aragon should be described, at least from the statistical point of view.

At present, there are eight Hospederías in: Loarre (3*) Roda de Isábena (2*), and Monasterio de San Juan de la Peña (4*), in the province of Huesca; Mesón de La Dolores, in Calatayud (3*), Sádaba (3*), Monasterio de Rueda, in Sástago (4*) and Castillo-Palacio del Papa Luna, in Illueca (3*) in the province of Zaragoza; and La Iglesuela del Cid (4*), in the province of Teruel. These Hospederías have a total capacity of 500 guests.

The Hospederías de Aragon network is regulated by Decree 294/2005, 13 December, Government of Aragon.

b.3. Tourist offices

Information centres are not only convenient, but necessary, for both Spaniards and foreigners. It is well-known that living in a place means that one can ignore, or undervalue or simply not appreciate areas of cultural interest for tourism: either for scenery, arts, architecture, geology, cuisine or history just being unconscious of them. Tourist offices provide a service of incalculable value which would otherwise not be available.

Therefore, various departments in the government of Aragon, through tourism committees or councils, have set up a large, important network of tourist offices throughout Aragon, as follows:

Zaragoza

Just in the capital city of Zaragoza there are nine tourist offices located in different points of the city, and 25 in the province: Alagón, Anento, Aranda de Moncayo, Ateca, Borja, Brea, Calatayud, Caspe, Daroca, Ejea de los Caballeros (2), Gallur, Gotor, Illueca, Jaraba, La Muela, Mequinenza, Mesones de Isuela, Sádaba, Sigüés, Sos del Rey Católico, Tarazona, Tauste, Uncastillo and Vera de Moncayo.

Huesca

Huesca has tourist information offices open all year in Aínsa (2), Barbastro (3), Benasque, Boltaña, Canfranc, Formigal, Graus, Jaca, Monzón (2), Nozal, Plan, Panticosa, Sabiñánigo, Salinas de Sin, Sallent de Gállego, and Torreciudad. There are others that open in summer and some holidays in: Abizanda, Alquézar, Ansó, Ayerbe, Broto, Benabarre, Castejón de Sos, Colungo, Echo, El Grado, Fiscal, Fonz, Fraga, Lecina, Puente La Reina de Jaca, Rodellar, Pirenarium, Valle de la Fueva, Torla and Viacamp, which makes 20 offices in the province open all year, and another 20 in summer and some weekends when many tourists are expected.

Teruel

Teruel has two offices in the capital city and twenty four in the rest of the province: Albarracín, Alcañiz, Alcalá de la Serlva, Alcorisa, Aliaga, Andorra Sierra de Arcos, Andorra, Beceite, Bronchales, Calaceite, Calamocha, Castellote, Manzanera, Más de las Matas, Mirambel, Molinos, Monreal del Campo, Montalbán, Mora de Rubielos, Moscardón, Mosqueruela, Puertomingalvo, Rubielos de Mora, and the Matarraña district office.

The tourist offices are distributed according to numbers as follows: Zaragoza 34, Teruel 26 and Huesca 40. It may be a pertinent question to know if the distribution of tourist information offices in Aragon increases the interest in tourism, or if it is because they are located in areas that tourists are interested in, anyway. This is a causal-effect question which cannot be answered without doubts. On countless occasions, the relationship between cause and effect is difficult to clarify, though their existence can be more than justified by the number of visitors received in some cases, and their justification is not so easy, in others.

At present, Huesca has fifty museums and information centres spread throughout the province, which is very significant and highly attractive for a quality information service to visiting tourists.

b.4. Itineraries through Aragon

Itineraries have been set up in the three provinces under similar, if not identical, criteria, which sometimes base the routes on a criterion or theme, though more generally, the geographic areas mainly correspond to districts in Aragon.

Themed itineraries in Zaragoza based on Mudejar and Romanesque heritage along Jewish and Moorish castles, ceramic, and health and wellness centres and Goya, the best wellknown Aragonese.

As mentioned before, Huesca is possibly the most tourist province with most visitors and the best known. It is substantially and always different from Zaragoza and Teruel. It is even different in the way it presents its itineraries. The Huesca Provincial Council, unlike Zaragoza and Teruel, has a very special and different model for tourism. In fact, tourism has become one of the most important activities in the province of Huesca. The Huesca “La Magia” (The Magic) campaign promoted tourism, inside and outside the province, as the “Magic of Huesca”. The Provincial Council of Huesca has run the campaign to boost the image of a province that can boast wonderful natural resources all along the countryside area.

Over the last few years, tourism has become an important source of wealth for the province of Huesca, paying a large contribution to create new jobs.

The culture and traditions of Huesca, the landscape, skiing, rural tourism and adventure sports are just a few examples of the assets held there. These ones become a major way of introducing the province to tourists.

This campaign, financed by the Provincial Council of Huesca and the European Union, focuses on three basic issues:

1. To care for the land preserving the landscape, customs, culture, art and people.
2. To be a suggesting invitation to know Huesca, especially in the low season, as the accommodation does not require massive promotion campaigns, but specific action on determined dates.
3. To work towards some particular and defined objective public, with special offers and affordable prices.

At the same, it works to coordinate policies and strategies for tourism for local organisations in the province of Huesca in order to provide tourist amenities common to all of them.

The campaign's web page also spreads the magic to be found in places all over the area. The Provincial Council of Huesca works with town councils, districts and exhibition centres in the province by giving subsidies/budgets to reduce the costs of holding fairs, exhibitions and different functions.

Many of the tourist and heritage resources in Huesca need new initiatives to expand this campaign. In 2001, the creation and implementation of tourist routes became one of the solutions to turn these places into attractions.

This Plan of Tourist Infrastructures gathers proposals from municipalities in Huesca province dealing with the establishment and implementation of innovative elements and design together with traditional materials for sign-posting projects to enrich itineraries and tourist attractions with high quality infrastructures, resulting in a model of featured and educational games, as well as tourism elements.

In this way, it is an attempt to increase the tourist potential of some areas that may find in this sector the solution to problems of depopulation and an aging population.

In short, the province is very diverse, and so are its tourist amenities. The fact is that part of the Pyrenees has the longer stay of their visitors, and is specialised in skiing, health cares, games and adventure, and has developed a network of nature reserves that confers a very special kind of reality of the province, that possesses a very special magic, which only can partly be explained due to the rock formations, from the Maladeta massif and Balaitus to the conglomerates of the Mallos de Riglos or the Sierra de Guara.

The National Park of Ordesa and Monte Perdido. These mountains whose summits reach 3,355 metres, are not only a geographical summit, but are also the top of the ranking of tourists in Aragon.

Romanesque architecture. Aragonese Romanesque art and architecture can be found in the countryside of Huesca, that, added to the nearness to France, makes it a very special place, which Huesca citizens, in general, and those of upper Aragon, in particular, know how to promote it properly offering tradition and modernity simultaneously, both with its handcrafts, cuisine and the restoration of its civil and religious buildings.

The reason why no specific itineraries have been marked out, as the Provincial Councils of Zaragoza and Teruel have done, may be due to the fact that the whole area is total attraction – the foothills, or the valleys of Ansó and Hecho are as interesting as the Pyrenees, in deed.

Huesca is perhaps the most privileged point of interest in Aragon, where the population and politicians have properly managed. One could say that Zaragoza and Teruel have austere and extreme beauty, while the beauty of the landscape in Huesca bursts forth and everywhere.

Teruel is completely different in its appearance, though beautiful in its austerity. The Provincial Council of Teruel has sketched out several itineraries, with very different thematic like Motor, Medieval fairs, Drumming Holy Week, Dinosaurs, Chapels and Romanesque abbeys ... for every season.

Although, as mentioned above, the three provinces have very different personalities, if we had to talk in general terms about what it is to feel Aragonese, we must think of Aragon as a single entity with a single personality, as the autonomous region of Aragon. The idea is not to think of Aragon as an autonomous region in the legal sense, but as a physical being, as, when all is said and done, any social collective consists of a number of human beings with social and psychological similarities and differences which provide information on the human factor.

c. Generic promotion

In this respect, the Aragonese authorities, conscious of the importance of the sector, are engaged, in a large part of their activity, in encouraging the generic promotion of tourism, not only in economic terms by providing tourism operators with money, but also legislating and analysing the sector from any possible point of view.

4.1 Aid and subsidies for tourism in Aragon

The Department of Industry, Commerce and Tourism has designed a series of activities in the form of investment aimed at boosting and helping socio-economic development of tourism in two modes:

1. Outright grants:

ORDER of 1st April 2008, which convenes grants for private companies to create infrastructures for tourism.

2. Subsidising credit:

ORDER of 24th April 2008, which convenes aid for subsidising credits for companies and non-profit making associations to invest in the tourist sector, which has placed value on, and contributed to the appearance of hotels and accommodation of different types.

Among the methods of promotion that the government of Aragon is using to encourage tourism in Aragon there is an important series of publications, the following to be noted:

Tourism and managing the territory

This studies the development of tourism activities from several points of view, experience and criticism is made available to the public at large on the council's web site. The book was published by the Tourism Council together with the Zaragoza Chamber of Commerce, Hotel Palafox, Tarazona town council and the Universidad de Zaragoza (School of Tourism), that is a benchmark for tourism in Aragon.

Thus, according to 19Article in DECREE 280/2003, of 4th. November from the Government of Aragon, which approves the organic structure of the Department of Industry, Commerce and Tourism under direct management of the Director General of Tourism, the Promotion, Planning and Study of Tourism Service is responsible for the following:

The generic promotion of tourism in Aragon working with other institutions, organizations and public and private companies in national and international markets, both individually and in collaboration with other autonomic regions as well as the Spanish Government's General Administration Department drawing up yearly plans to promote tourism amenities in Aragon and expanding and disseminating them among the private sector and other regional public institutions and organisations with competences in promoting tourism.

Designing and coordinating the Quality Tourism Plan:

Once the Quality Tourism Plan has been elaborated, is crucial:

1. The coordination with provincial councils, regions and municipality tourism councils for activities in promoting tourism outside Aragon by means of the corresponding coordination commission.
2. The Relationship with Turespaña on the issue of external promotion of inter-regional tourism brands, mainly in a way that could affect the "Spanish Pyrenees" and "The Santiago Way".
3. Publishing and diffusing books or promotional booklets or advertising material.
4. Collecting statistics of tourism, analysing them as well as broadcasting the tourism information generated by the regional tourism sector.
5. The study of the traditional tourism markets, the newly emerging markets and those with a high potential for tourism amenities in Aragon.
6. Identifying new products and opportunities and transmitting the information to the implied companies in the region.

4.2 Any other tasks attributed to it by law

4.2.1 Resources, tourists, promotion and brand

Aragon has a wide variety of natural, heritage and cultural resources of great interest to tourists, which means a very valuable and competitive position for tourism. On the other hand, Aragon spreads over a large territory, which makes difficult to establish a unified brand image for the region when offering it as a tourism destination abroad.

Aragon is the tenth autonomic region in receiving foreign visitors in the national rank, as shown in table 1. Taking the region's resources into account, we believe that this position is still far from the one that Aragon ought to be occupying. Are promotion policies really as effective as they ought to be? Some of the respondents expressed the difficulty for identifying Aragon abroad, a prime issue for achieving the goal of effective promotion.

	Total	Percentage
Spain	35.768.646	100,00%
Andalusia	5.917.640	16,54%
Aragon	383.322	1,07%
Asturias	168.873	0,47%
Balears	6.416.633	17,94%
Canay Island	4.952.353	13,85%
Cantabria	186.035	0,52%
Castilla y Leon	825.198	2,31%
Castilla - La Mancha	327.140	0,91%
Catalonia	8.295.088	23,19%
Comunidad valenciana	2.448.102	6,84%
Extremadura	139.653	0,39%
Galicia	692.121	1,93%
Madrid	3.827.156	10,70%
Murcia	208.614	0,58%
Navarra	173.240	0,48%
Basque country	704.029	1,97%
la Rioja	81.571	0,23%
Ceuta	12.594	0,04%
Melilla	9.284	0,03%

Source: INE, 2009

Table 1. Foreign tourist, year 2008

Though tourism companies, associations and governments attend international fairs, the brand is not visible abroad as a unified one. Different brochures, advertising, displays etc. show the regions, the provinces giving a diversified image which is difficult for tour operators, agencies and foreign tourists to be identified. As a result, the problem is that no one sees Aragon as a whole or unit. Moreover, the tourism technicians who were interviewed from different European countries (Holland, Turkey, Germany, Finland, etc.) said that they did not know “Aragon” as a tourist destination. Obviously, there is a pushing necessity to sell “Aragon” as a brand in other countries, but the appropriate advertising has yet to be made.

	Total	Percentage
Spain	155.397.856	100,00%
Andalusia	20.200.272	13,00%
Aragon	800.411	0,52%
Asturias	363.310	0,23%
Balears	43.144.382	27,76%
Canay Island	39.008.526	25,10%
Cantabria	383.690	0,25%
Castilla y Leon	1.308.550	0,84%
Castilla - La Mancha	578.190	0,37%
Catalonia	27.793.280	17,89%
Comunidad valenciana	9.726.654	6,26%
Extremadura	248.420	0,16%
Galicia	1.357.733	0,87%
Madrid	8.158.746	5,25%
Murcia	547.900	0,35%
Navarra	292.990	0,19%
Basque country	1.314.452	0,85%
la Rioja	135.050	0,09%
Ceuta	18.930	0,01%
Melilla	16.370	0,01%

Source: INE, 2009

Table 2. Guest nights by foreigners per year 2008

Something similar is happening with the percentage of guest-nights spent in Aragon by foreigners. Aragon is still in tenth position, which reinforces the data given above and shown in the following table. During the interviews carried out with tourism technicians in Aragon, the handicap with one unified brand always came up, and it was considered an issue of vital importance by everyone. If we look at the arrival of foreign tourists according to autonomic regions, it can be seen that the Balearic Islands, Canary Islands, Andalusia and Catalonia, among others, had 83.75% of the total guest-nights from foreign tourists in 2008, which is really a high percentage. However, in any autonomic regions, negative year-to-year variations were recorded, except Aragon, Canary Islands and Extremadura, which is highly significant. These overall data and the data from the Statistics Institute of Aragon throw up a series of figures that show that the Aragonese “Pyrenees” brand is the one that is starting to be recognised and identified in tourism markets in Spain and abroad. Thus, in December 2008, there were 45.6% more foreigners in the area of the Aragonese Pyrenees than in December 2007. This year-to-year variation, far from being significant (as the numbers coming in both 2007 and 2008 were very low) shows that the figures of foreigners are increasing, as shown by the fig 6.

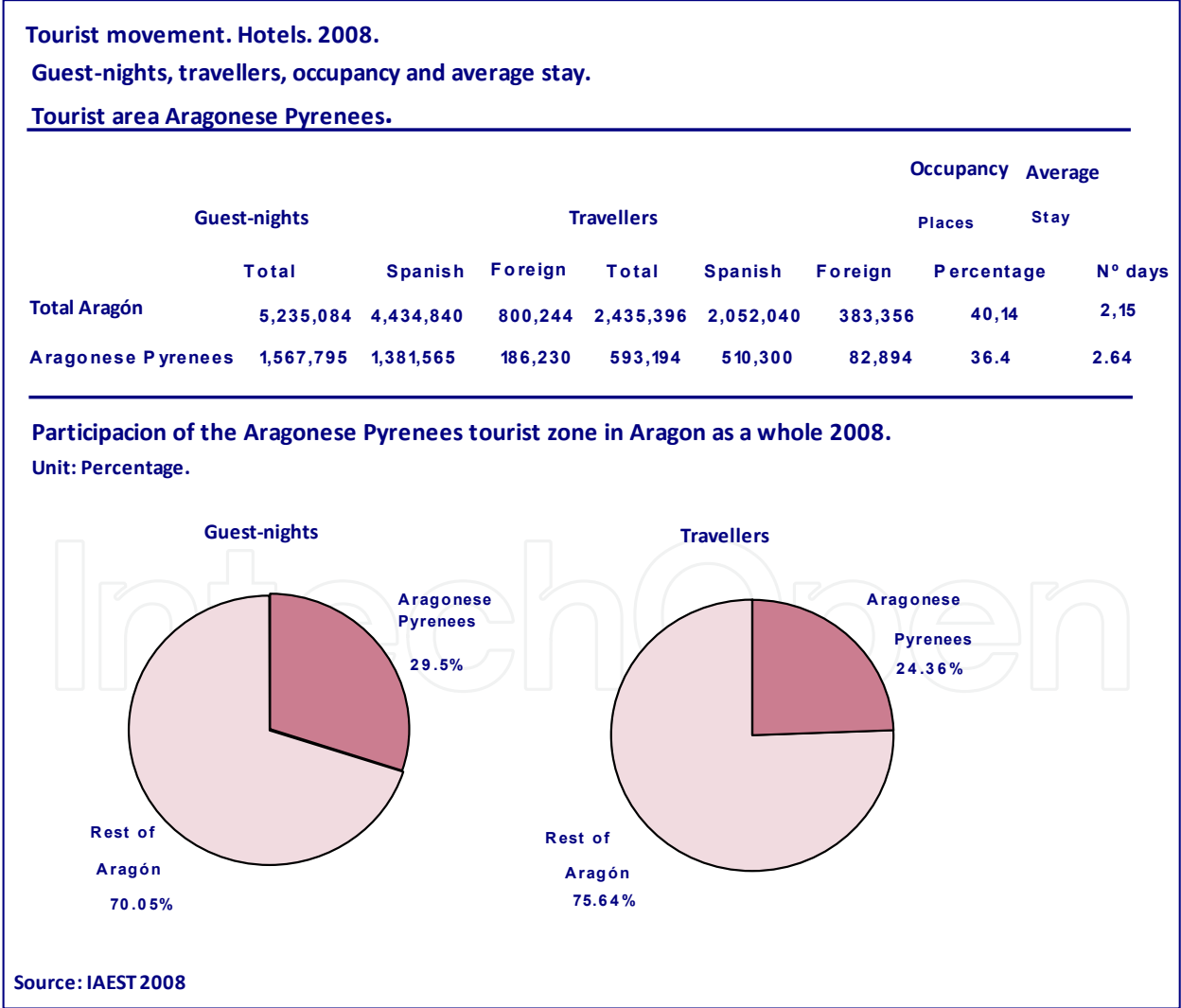


Fig. 6. Tourist movement. Hotels 2008.

2,435,396 (84.71%) of the total number of tourists who visited Aragon in 2008 were Spaniards and 15.29% foreigners. The Aragonese Pyrenees were visited by 593,194 tourists, of which 86.03% were Spaniards and 13.97% foreigners. The Aragonese Pyrenees accounted for almost 30% of the guest-nights, and almost 25% of travellers coming to Aragon as tourists.

Finally, we must describe the origin of the tourists coming to Aragon. 83% of tourists come from Spain, while only 14.17% are foreigners, whereas 11.18% are European Union (EU) citizens. Table 3 shows that most visitors to the region are from: France (134,796), Portugal

	Total	percentage
Total	4.405.040	100,00%
Spanish	3.780.643	85,83%
Foreigners	624.396	14,17%
European Union (ex. Spain)	492.550	11,18%
Germany	70.414	1,60%
Austria	15.632	0,35%
Belgium	19.849	0,45%
Denmark	2.463	0,06%
Finland	2.153	0,05%
France	134.796	3,06%
Greece	1.240	0,03%
Ireland	434	0,01%
Italy	61.024	1,39%
Luxemburg	808	0,02%
Netherlands	15.834	0,36%
Poland	10.786	0,24%
Portugal	94.235	2,14%
United Kingdom	4.804	0,11%
Czech Republic	1.270	0,03%
Sweeden	3.752	0,09%
Rest of EU	4.657	0,11%
Norway	4.307	0,10%
Russia	3.499	0,08%
Switzerland	4.922	0,11%
Rest of Europe	2.339	0,05%
United States	24.493	0,56%
Rest of America	35.226	0,80%
Africa	9.629	0,22%
Rest of World	26.730	0,61%

Table 3. Guest-nights travellers to Aragon by country of origin.

(94,235), Germany (70,414), Italy (61,024) and the UK (48,804), followed by the other countries whose numbers are insignificant. This data proves that Aragon needs to increase its promotion as a unified brand in the rest of Europe and the world.

c.1. Attendance to fairs

The government of Aragon and private initiatives are making great efforts to carry the image of Aragon as a tourist destination to the whole of Spain and Europe. For this reason, the Aragon Pavilion attends to 30 tourism fairs in Spain: some of them are general, and others specialised. The specialised tourism fairs are those for skiing, spas, camping, mountains, hot-water treatments, active sports, adventure, nature and rural tourism.

In Europe, the Government of Aragon is participating in 8 fairs in France, our neighbouring country across the Pyrenees. Other countries in Europe are represented as follows: Germany, 10; Belgium, 3; the Netherlands, 4; United Kingdom, 4; Portugal, 2; Denmark: 2; Italy, 2; Finland, 1; Sweden, 1; Norway, 1; Luxemburg, 1; Russia, 1; Hungary, 1; Slovakia, 1 and Czech Republic, 1.

The display of means and human resources is quite remarkable. One should expect that the results would be equally remarkable, but unfortunately, the data are not as positive as foreseen.

5. Sustainability in tourism in Aragón (Spain)

Despite the fact that tourism has been, and still is, one of the main production sectors in Spain and Aragon, that has generated a great deal of wealth, neither politicians nor institutions are giving the importance that it deserves mainly in a context of global crisis that is still going on.

Sustainability has been applied to different industries in economy but it is just lately starting to be considered in tourism sector.

Our analysis suggests that, at times, tourism is being seen and experienced as a risk, in the sense that it is incompatible with maintaining natural resources in the long term, or even other types of cultural, ethnographic, life-style, etc.

Therefore, our study focuses on the fact that tourism is compatible with sustainability (Elkington, 1994), as it would be:

- Providing optimum use of environmental resources that are a basic element of development of tourism, maintaining essential ecological processes and helping to preserve natural resources and biological diversity.
- Respecting the socio-cultural authenticity of the host communities, preserving their cultural, architectural and life assets and traditional values, and contribute to understanding intercultural tolerance.
- Ensuring long-term, viable economic activities, providing all agents with widely distributed socio-economic benefits, opportunities for stable employment, and obtaining an income and social services for the host communities, and to reduce poverty (Sanagustín et al, 2011).

5.1 Resources & human factor

Aragon has all the natural resources, hotel infrastructure and financial investment required to make of tourism a profitable activity. However, it can be observed that the results are quite far from the ones expected, what could suggest that not everything is being done properly. Perhaps some of the factors or these combinations should be reviewed. Empirical studies point that human factor ought to be put under review (Sanagustín, et al, 2008). Aragon is wealthy in culture, landscape, cuisine and sports, highly appreciated by tourists, who look at it through the eyes of "others"; nevertheless, sometimes Aragonese population does not appreciate the richness of the territory. It is a truth, though philosophical, that one couldn't love another if one does not love oneself, or more specifically: you cannot offer something with love if you do not love it by yourself. Learning to love what you possess and offer it with the purest hospitality, apart from being a very satisfying and gratifying personal experience, may become a very wealthy experience, and not only financially speaking.

5.2 Tourism Image and brand

The diversity of natural, heritage and cultural patrimony is a valuable competitive advantage, due to the fact that Aragon is a very broad region; however, this advantage makes difficult to establish a unified image as a tourist destination, and is a hindrance in the process of seeking a single reason why "Aragon" should be a very easily identified tourist destination to be chosen by foreigners. Most data analysed in this chapter show that it is necessary to improve general promotion in Europe and throughout the world, using only one single, unified and easily recognised brand image.

The Aragonese Pyrenees are starting to be recognised and identified as a destination by tourist markets in Spain and abroad. Thus, in December 2008, there were 45.6% more foreigners in the area of the Aragonese Pyrenees than in December 2007. This inter-annual variation, far from being significant (as the numbers coming in both 2007 and 2008 were very low) shows that the numbers of foreigners are increasing. We wonder if the Aragonese Pyrenees as a brand image for tourism would be capable of attracting people who do not want skiing or climbing mountains, looking for other types of tourism. Data from various sources show that rural and cultural tourism is increasing in this Spanish region.

5.3 Rural tourism

Rural Tourism is one of the main types of tourism developed in this region due to its direct link to historical evolution, its orographic situation and the peaceful quietness of Aragon. The search of authentic destinations, that have been witness of old civilizations, lead directly to this offer. There is a direct relationship between tourists and the host community (Boissevain, 2005). Tourism generates economic activity and new jobs; it also increases confidence and value in the host community reinforcing its specific identity. Mass tourism can destroy the essence of host communities, making them commercialised and standardised in a global planet. In Aragon, rural tourism is a complement to traditional countryside and mountain activity, without losing the essence and authenticity of the area.

Authenticity must be an engine for sustainable development, which will remain constant, or even increase, in times of crisis, while mass tourism falls down.

6. Conclusion

Sustainable tourism in Aragon (Spain) is a real possibility that provides beneficial economic resources for any stakeholder: social, environmental or financial ones, that according to Mowford & Munt (2009) is the new notion for sustainability, that, at its most basis encapsulates the growing concern for the environment and natural resources, though has also had increasing resonance in social and economic issues". Close to this statement are the words of McCool & Moisey (2002), which in his introduction say: "sustainable tourism is a kinder, gentler form of tourism that is generally small in scale, sensitive to cultural and environment impact and respects the involvement of local people in policy decisions".

In our opinion and for our case, politicians as well as entrepreneurs or tourism agency owners, hotel/houses hosts could profit from this type of countryside tourism that would contribute to increase even the Aragonese population's life quality and style. Moreover, this global financial crisis could be collaborating with the increasing number of tourists visiting Aragon, as rural tourism is less expensive than the conventional one. In this sense, it could be said that sustainable tourism could turn vice into virtue: the crisis which is mostly negative has turned positive as far as rural tourism is related. From different perspectives, it is also easier to maintain a small rural house than an international hotel.

Most of the visitors are regional and national citizens, who stay in Aragon on holidays and short periods that want a wide range choice: any type of routes and itineraries all over the region that could satisfy any tourist wish or demand. However, during last years the number of foreigner visitors (mostly Europeans) has increased, specially in the Pyrenees, mainly active tourism (sport, mountains, landscape and gastronomy), that are becoming real interest point. According to the INE data, about 25% of the tourists visiting Aragon were concentrated in Pyrenees that are becoming a tourism brand recognised by most tourists visiting Aragon, even if they do not stay there.

Social changes are happening as quickly as tourist demands are been transformed. If some years ago, the classical formula of "beach-and-sun" was enough to gratify and satisfy the tourists, nowadays they demand some other conditions much closer to natural and ecological environments where biological diversity is as important as preserving nature.. Postmodernism society is characterised by the tendency to live in larger cities, with a lot of stress and competitiveness. A new tendency is emerging nowadays, people are looking for nature to have a rest and pay more attention to their health and wellness and they are also willing to have a deep communication face to face with others, it is called the integral style of living (Wilber, 2001.)

As far as the results of this survey are concerned, this goal would need some characteristics to be changed to adapt the tourism offer to the present and future demand. Tourism trends are projecting a new tourism style. Values like authenticity, biological diversity, natural landscapes are highly appreciated. Hospitality and personal attention are also positively evaluated as well as a good or standard level of regional gastronomy. Traditional habits,

folklore, ethnical or anthropological specialities are also searched and appreciated. In times of financial crisis a sense of humanized hospitality is also highly appreciated, whereas in international hotels, this hospitality sense is absent.

7. Acknowledgment

A sense of acknowledgement should be expressed to the following organizations and services:

Government of Aragon.

Chambers of Commerce in Aragon.

Town Councils of Zaragoza, Huesca and Teruel.

Statistics Institute of Aragon.

FUNDEAR: reports on the economic situation in Aragon.

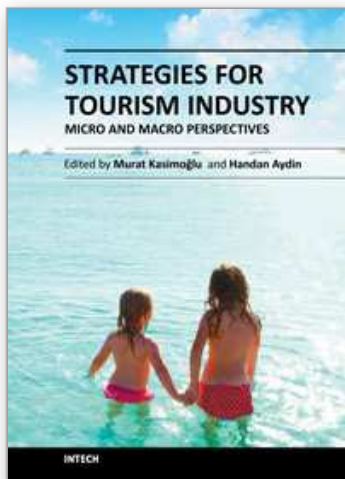
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Strategies for Tourism Industry - Micro and Macro Perspectives

Edited by Dr. Murat Kasimoglu

ISBN 978-953-51-0566-4

Hard cover, 392 pages

Publisher InTech

Published online 20, April, 2012

Published in print edition April, 2012

Today, it is considered good business practice for tourism industries to support their micro and macro environment by means of strategic perspectives. This is necessary because we cannot contemplate companies existing without their environment. If companies do not involve themselves in such undertakings, they are in danger of isolating themselves from the shareholder. That, in turn, creates a problem for mobilizing new ideas and receiving feedback from their environment. In this respect, the contributions of academics from international level together with the private sector and business managers are eagerly awaited on topics and sub-topics within Strategies for Tourism Industry - Micro and Macro Perspectives.

How to reference

In order to correctly reference this scholarly work, feel free to copy and paste the following:

Victoria Sanagustin Fons, Jose Antonio Mosene Fierro, Maria Gomez y Patino and Laura Arena Luna (2012). Sustainable Tourism in Aragon, a Case of a Spanish Inside Region, Strategies for Tourism Industry - Micro and Macro Perspectives, Dr. Murat Kasimoglu (Ed.), ISBN: 978-953-51-0566-4, InTech, Available from: <http://www.intechopen.com/books/strategies-for-tourism-industry-micro-and-macro-perspectives/sustainable-tourism-in-aragon-a-case-of-a-spanish-inside-region->

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