

Tourist satisfaction about **religious** events in Andalusia

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Abstract | Religious tourism is a growing sector. Knowing the profile of the tourist and measuring their satisfaction is very important for all stakeholders. This study focuses on analysing the tourist degree of satisfaction with the services provided during visits to religious events in Andalusia (Spain) according to their socio-demographic profile and behaviour. The data are derived from a sample of 500 tourists to the Easter in Seville and 350 tourists to the *El Rocío* pilgrimage in Almonte, Huelva. The probability of being satisfied depends on socio-demographic characteristics (such as marital status or age) and travel-related characteristics (such as motivation or quality of services).

Keywords | Religious tourism, Pilgrimage, Satisfaction.

Resumo | O turismo religioso é uma atividade em crescimento. Conhecer o perfil do turista e medir a sua satisfação é muito importante para todas as entidades relacionadas com o sector do turismo. Este estudo procura examinar a satisfação do turista em eventos religiosos na Andalusia (Espanha), de acordo com o perfil sociodemográfico e o comportamento do turista. Os dados provêm de uma amostra de 500 pessoas que visitaram a Semana Santa em Sevilha e de 350 pessoas que participaram na peregrinação do Rocío, em Almonte, Huelva. A probabilidade de estar satisfeito com a visita depende de certas variáveis sociodemográficas (como o estado civil ou a idade) e outras variáveis relacionadas com o comportamento perante a viagem (como a motivação ou a qualidade dos serviços).

Palavras-chave | Turismo religioso, Peregrinação, Satisfação.

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1. Introduction to religious tourism

Religiously motivated tourism is the oldest type of tourism (Rinschede, 1992). However, nowadays religious tourism has emerged in many regions as one of the important tourism products. Across the globe, religious destinations associated with just about every religious tradition, as well as some that are independent of any organised religious tradition, have been receiving growing numbers of pilgrims (Reader, 2007; WTO, 2008). The World Tourism Organization (WTO, 2008) estimates that between 300 and 330 million people travel annually for religious purposes, creating an economic impact of around 13 000 million Euros. If we add tourists from India and other Asian countries the figure increases to a total of over 500 million. And these numbers kept rising in the last few years.

In Spain, and especially in Andalusia, there are many religious destinations and events with a great tourist attraction. Easter and the pilgrimages are particularly important. The preparation and celebration of these sacred events involves a large number of actors, generating a large socioeconomic impact.

2. Benefits and costs of religious tourism

The development of religious tourism brings a number of benefits to destinations at individual and collective levels. The benefits for religious institutions are obvious. Shrines receive a much larger amount of donations and alms. The Lourdes shrine currently receives over 18 million Euros per year (90% of its financial income) in offerings, donations and legacies. Furthermore, the development of religious tourism destinations can be seen as a way of reaffirming the authority of the religious institution in times of weakness (Covell, 2005; Dahlberg, 1991). Others see tourism as the opportunity to

draw people to places of worship and attract more followers. There are many accounts of people who began the pilgrimage of the Way of St James for secular reasons but by the end of the road have strong religious feelings due to the experiences they went through on the journey and their contact with other Christians. Others are simply pleased by what tourism and religion contribute to society. Along these lines, in a 2010 interview with the Coadjutor Archbishop of Seville and Apostolic Administrator of Córdoba, Juan José Asenjo Pelegrina declared his satisfaction with the Church's contribution to society: "not only does it create good Christians who will always be good citizens but it can also help out in a material way due to the impact religious tourism can have on employment and the economy". However, he did warn that this last point should not become a motive in itself.

As stated by the archbishop, religious tourism destinations do not only create benefits for the ecclesiastical authorities. For example, religious tourism has revived traditional handcrafting activities. The religious tourist has always had an earnest desire for relics that are a symbol of the destination. These relics include dust from the road, moss from the church doors or wax from the altar candles. Nowadays there are still many religious tourists who like to take a souvenir or leave an offering. Therefore the production of handcrafted articles typical to the area is a good choice for the traditional craft guilds (Robles, 2004).

Religious tourism also encourages the restoration and preservation of the cultural wealth (WTO, 2008). Religious traditions have fuelled the cultural background of towns throughout the centuries (Porcal, 2006). Spain, for example, has recovered part of its cultural and historical heritage thanks to the development of tourist attractions such as the Network of Spanish Jewish Quarters or the Way of St James.

The religious tourist is usually more loyal to religious destinations than the traditional tourist or those who travel for other reasons (Robles, 2004).

Millán *et al.* (2010) maintain that religious tourism is perhaps the only type of tourism that may improve in times of crisis such as this one. Places such as Guadalupe (Mexico) or Santiago de Compostela (Spain) have broken records for the number of travellers even in the midst of a financial crisis. According to a Gallup (2009) survey, religion is a powerful positive force amongst the most financially disadvantaged populations, a literal form of “social security” in times of crisis. Due to the anxiety caused by the current financial crisis, many people have returned to their places of worship. As Bloch (cited by Vukonic, 1992) wrote, “Where there is hope, there is religion”.

Finally, Lanquar (2008) stresses that pilgrimages and religious meetings make it easier to weave together peaceful contact among peoples and encourage “solidarity tourism” in the fight against poverty and for the sustainable development of humanity.

Of course, it is not all positive. It also entails significant costs: environmental impacts, social conflicts between tourists and pilgrims, and economic costs not only for individual entities embarking on tourism development but also for development of supporting infrastructure and appropriate marketing actions. Religious tourism development is generally dependent on policies and programs by governmental agencies, marketing by destination or tourism organizations, independent actions by many entrepreneurs and independent actions by many religious institutions. In some destinations, such as Lourdes (France), most religious tourism development has been generated by independent, ecclesiastical decisions. Harris (1999) shows how local and regional religious authorities played a seminal role in this process. Moreover, the lack of ecclesiastical support was a significant factor in the failure of other Marian apparition sites, even in the same region as Lourdes, to develop into

significant pilgrimage centres. A key to sustainable religious tourism is strategic planning by those who manage holy places and events (Ambrosio and Pereira, 2007). Above all they must take into account the added complexity of managing places and events that combine religion and tourism (Shackley, 2001; Olsen, 2006).

3. Complexity of religious tourism planning

Strategic planning has been progressively incorporated into the different approaches to tourism planning (Getz, 1986; Hall, 2000), encouraging a holistic analysis of the competitive environment, as well as the co-ordination and co-operation among stakeholders (Vila *et al.*, 2009). Fortunately, it has also been proved easy to integrate into the management processes (Ansoff, 1988; Hall, 2000; Ivars, 2004; Porter, 1982).

Tourism planning has evolved notably in Spain since the 1960s.¹ However, progress in the religious tourism sector has been much slower and more complicated. Shackley (2001) confirms that only a small number of those who manage religious places and events have made any kind of strategic plans. Sometimes this is due to the nature of their premises and management, in other cases because of religious reasons, or it can be due to a lack of both financial resources and experience. Strategic planning is vital, but it is much more complex due to the challenges arising from the tourism-religion combination (Shackley, 2001; Olsen, 2006). This added complexity is seen in both internal and external management issues.

Internal challenges include the difficulty of managing the growing number of visitors and at the same time maintaining the necessary balance to preserve both the physical and environmental surroundings of the place in order to provide a high quality experience for visitors. As the number of visitors

¹ Numerous studies have confirmed the contribution that planning has made in terms of bringing qualitative improvements to management (Ivars, 2004). These benefits are especially evident in areas such as strategic marketing (Bigné *et al.*, 2000).

increases it becomes more difficult to preserve an atmosphere conducive to worship and meditation. Similarly there is a greater probability of an increased diversity in the motives and expectations of visitors (Santos, 2003). There are different types of religious travellers. Additionally, these religious places and events increasingly attract people with very different motivations; not only religious tourists but also secular tourists with non-religious motivations.

Accordingly, Smith (1992) and many others identify tourism and pilgrimage as opposite end-points on a continuum of travel (Figure 1), the polarities are labelled as sacred (a), and as secular or profane (e). The central area is generally termed religious tourism, distinguishing between a traveller “more pilgrim than tourist” (b), a traveller “as pilgrim as tourist” (c) and a traveller “more tourist than pilgrim” (d), depending on whether their motivations and activities are more or less predominantly faith or secular based. These positions reflect the multiple and changing motivations of the traveller, whose interests and activities may switch from tourist to pilgrim and vice versa, even without the individual being aware of the change.

Due to the diversity of travellers it is obvious that those who manage religious places and events need to understand their visitors: know their profile and understand how to satisfy their needs (de Sousa, 1993).

The design and implementation of tourism strategies and policies requires an extensive knowledge of tourist profiles and an in-depth awareness of the variables that affect their level of satisfaction.

pilgrimage		religious tourism		tourism
A	B	C	D	E
sacred		faith/profane		secular
A - pious pilgrim B - pilgrim > tourist C - pilgrim = tourist D - pilgrim < tourist E - secular tourist				

Source: Smith (1992).

Figure 1 | The pilgrim-tourist path.

4. Easter in Seville and the El Rocío pilgrimage in Almonte (Huelva), two important religious events in Andalusia

Easter and the pilgrimages or *romerías* are two of the most important religious events in Andalusia. The city of Seville is noteworthy for its celebration of Easter. This city has one of the oldest, most popular and most traditional processions in Spain.

The Seville Easter has a great socio-financial impact as it involves a large number of people: This ranges from those involved in the Easter preparations (embroiderers, goldsmiths, gilders, image-makers, florists, chandlers...) to those who are linked to the retail side, hospitality and accommodation, cafes, bars, restaurants and travel agencies, amongst others. Seville has 699 759 inhabitants (Instituto de Estadística de Andalucía, 2011). The tourism in the city generated by Easter has increased by 39% between 1999 and 2007, rising from 676 000 to 940 000 tourists. The overall financial impact on the city and surrounding areas in 2007 from the preparation and celebration of Easter was between 162 and 164 million Euros – 85% more than in 1999 (Cámara de Comercio de Sevilla, 2008).

The El Rocío pilgrimage, held in Almonte (Huelva), is one of the most well-known pilgrimages in Spain, attracting visitors from various places, both nationally and abroad. Almonte is a rural municipality with only 21 458 inhabitants (Instituto de Estadística de Andalucía, 2011) and therefore the pilgrimage is a significant extra source of income for the inhabitants of the area who are mainly involved in agriculture. Over the last decades the number of people in Almonte during the pilgrimage has increased greatly to a current figure of 1 million. These people spend an average of over 800 € per head at the pilgrimage. The main costs are for the oxen or horse drawn carriage to travel the road, decorating the carriage and animals, accommodation at a hotel or property rental, food or a catering service, a costume of short jacket and chaps for men or the flamenco dress and accessories for women, pipes and drums

as souvenirs. Due to the lack of information and the particular nature of the pilgrimage it is difficult to calculate the overall financial impact (Rubio and Esteban, 2008) but there is no doubt that it is significant, exceeding 800 million Euros.

As previously mentioned, it becomes more difficult to preserve an atmosphere conducive to worship and meditation as the number of visitors increases. Similarly there is a greater probability of an increased diversity in the motives and expectations of visitors (Santos, 2003). Therefore, the following sections will examine the profile of the tourist attending these two religious events with a focus on analysing some of the factors that affect their levels of satisfaction.

5. Methodology

Fieldwork was undertaken in 2008 to analyse the tourist satisfaction at religious events. A survey was taken of 500 people aged over 18, who attended the Easter processions in Seville, and 350 people aged over 18 who participated in the El Rocío Pilgrimage.

The questionnaire had four sections. The first section was related to the tourist's socio-demographic profile (gender, age, education...). The second section concerned their behaviour (type of trip, duration, expenses...). The third section covered the reasons why they came to the Seville Easter or participated in the El Rocío pilgrimage. The fourth section collected the opinions about services, accommodation, catering, information... and overall satisfaction with their trip.

To analyse the probability that a tourist is satisfied with the trip, a binary choice logit model was used. A binary logit model was used instead of a multinomial logit model, in order to simplify the process. Using this model, the probability of tourist satisfaction in relation to their expectations

can be evaluated according to their socio-financial profile and the nature of their trip. In the logit model the dependent variable is the level of satisfaction, assuming the value of 1 if the tourist is satisfied with the trip and 0 to the contrary.

The logit model is:

$$y = \frac{1}{1 + e^{-u}} + \varepsilon = Pr(\text{satisfaction}) + \varepsilon$$

where u is the following function:

$$u = (\beta_0 + \beta_1 x_1 + \beta_2 x_2 + \beta_3 x_3 + \dots + \beta_n x_n),$$

where n is the number of independent variables in the model.

In this case, out of all the variables considered, the only ones that could significantly explain the probability of tourist satisfaction in connection with the expectations for this type of tourism were the following:

- Civil Status. This has been divided into various binary variables: Civil status single (*css*), civil status married (*csm*), civil status divorced/separated (*csd*) and other civil status, this lastly being the reference variable.
- Gender (*gen*). Dummy variable, assuming the value of 1 if the sex is male and 0 if sex is female.
- Age (*age*).
- Area (*area*). The place of residence has been set as a binary variable, with 1 being an urban area and 0 a rural area.
- Security (*sec*). Binary variable, assuming the value of 1 if the tourist finds that the place visited is secure and 0 otherwise.
- Spending on hotels, restaurants or retail outlets in the area (*spn*).
- Education. This has been divided into various binary variables: Higher studies (degrees and diplomas) (*ehs*), secondary education (baccalaureate and vocational training) (*ese*), basic education (*ebe*), and the uneducated, with this last being the reference variable.

- Type of trip (*typ*). Binary variable, assuming the value of 1 if respondent was visiting the Seville Easter and 0 if respondent was participating in the El Rocío pilgrimage.
- Quality of accommodation services (*acc*), including hotels, hostels, and rental properties. It assumes the value of 1 if tourist is satisfied with the accommodation service and 0 to the contrary.
- Household income (*hi*).
- Treatment received (*tr*), in restaurants, hotels, information offices... Binary variable, assuming the value of 1 if the treatment is correct and 0 otherwise.
- Quality of food services (*qf*). Binary variable, assuming the value of 1 if the food services are good and 0 otherwise.
- Price of food and accommodation services. It has been divided into 3 binary variables: expensive (*pfce*), normal (*pfcn*) and cheap, with this last being the reference variable.
- Religious belief. It has been divided into 4 binary variables: practicing Catholic (*prc*), no-practicing Catholic (*nprc*), other religions (*orel*) and atheists, this lastly being the reference variable.
- Number of processions or Brotherhood houses visited (*npbh*).
- Motivation of the trip. It has been divided into 4 dummy variables: processions (*pro*), *madrugá* in Seville (*mad*), jumping the fence in Almonte (*jum*), and others, this lastly being the reference variable.

Thus, the logit model is:

$$y = \frac{1}{1 + e^{-u}} + \varepsilon = Pr(\text{satisfaction}) + \varepsilon$$

where u is the following function:

$$u = (\beta_0 + \beta_1 \text{css} + \beta_2 \text{csm} + \beta_3 \text{csd} + \beta_4 \text{gen} + \beta_5 \text{age} + \beta_6 \text{area} + \beta_7 \text{sec} + \beta_8 \text{sfn} + \beta_9 \text{ehs} + \beta_{10} \text{ese} + \beta_{11} \text{ebe} + \beta_{12} \text{typ} + \beta_{13} \text{acc} + \beta_{14} \text{hi} + \beta_{15} \text{tr} + \beta_{16} \text{qf} + \beta_{17} \text{prc} + \beta_{18} \text{nprc} + \beta_{19} \text{orel} + \beta_{21} \text{npbh} + \beta_{22} \text{pro} + \beta_{23} \text{mad} + \beta_{24} \text{jum} + \beta_{25} \text{pfce} + \beta_{26} \text{pfcn})$$

The methodology was implemented from EViews, version 7.0.

6. Results

Table 1 summarizes the characteristics of visitors to the two events analysed. Both the tourists attending Easter and those on the pilgrimage to El Rocío tend to make the journey for religious reasons and are loyal to the destination.

Regarding the analysis of tourist satisfaction, Table 2 shows the results obtained from the logit model.

Based on these results we can highlight the following:

- Marital status influences tourist satisfaction. Single tourists are more likely to be satisfied with the trip.
- The age decreases the probability of being satisfied with the trip. This was more notable at the El Rocío pilgrimage because many of the pilgrims had to spend the night in the open air due to the lack of beds available over these dates. It was noted that the older the person the more demands they had for services and therefore had a lower level of satisfaction with this type of tourism.
- The quality of accommodation and catering services increases the probability of being satisfied.
- Public safety increases the probability of being satisfied.
- Religious belief influences tourist satisfaction. Practicing Catholics are more likely to be satisfied with the trip.
- Motivation influences tourist satisfaction. Tourists who participate in jumping the fence in El Rocío are more likely to be satisfied.

Table 1 | Tourist profile: El Rocío pilgrimage and Easter in Seville

Variable	Categories	El Rocío pilgrimage (%)	Easter in Seville (%)
Sex	Male	42,4	55,2
	Female	57,6	44,8
Age	0-12 years old	1,00	2,1
	13-18 years old	4,2	12,1
	19-35 years old	41,1	39,6
	36-65 years old	44,3	42,8
	More than 65 years old	9,4	3,4
Level of education	No education	3,1	4,4
	Primary education	36,9	12,7
	Secondary education	51,7	68,5
	Higher education	8,3	14,4
Marital status	Single	27,6	35,9
	Married	46,8	54,8
	Divorced	13,2	3,6
	Other	12,4	5,7
Income level	Less than 600 €	1,2	3,2
	600- 1000 €	4,3	9,3
	1001- 1500 €	14,8	19,3
	1501- 2500 €	13,4	35,8
	More than 2500 €	66,3	32,4
Place of origin	Spain	84,6	79,5
	European Union	12,3	18,4
	Other	3,1	2,1
Length of stay	Less than 24 hours	0,3	25,6
	One day	4,5	23,4
	2 - 3 days	34,6	7,8
	More than 3 days	60,6	43,2
Average total and per diem tourist expenditure	Less than 35 €	0,4	10,4
	36-50 €	3,6	27,8
	51-75 €	28,9	15,6
	More than 75 €	67,1	46,2
Companion	Alone	4,1	2,6
	Relatives	13,6	44,8
	Friends	73,6	51,8
	Others	8,7	0,8
Motivation	Only religious	56,7	63,4
	Religious and other	26,1	34,3
	No religious	17,1	2,3
Satisfaction of accommodation services	Satisfied	89,6	46,7
	Unsatisfied	10,4	53,3
Repetition of the pilgrimage	Yes	86,2	72,5
	No	13,8	27,5
Overall satisfaction	Satisfied	90,2	76,3
	Indifferent	3,4	2,5
	Unsatisfied	6,4	21,2

Source: own construction.

7. Conclusions

Religious tourism is a growing sector. The number of visitors to the El Rocío pilgrimage and the Seville Easter has grown in the last few years with thousands of tourists coming both from within Spain and abroad.

According to the results of this study, the probability of being satisfied with the religious events depends on socio-demographic variables (such as marital status, age or religious belief) and travel-related variables (such as motivation, quality of services or public safety).

Although this type of tourism is based on faith

Table 2 | Estimated logit model

Dependent Variable: y Method: ML - Binary Logit (Quadratic hill climbing) Included observations: 850				
Variable	Coefficient	Standard error	z	Sig.
Constant	0,587	0,010	58,71	*
Marital status: married (csm)	0,645	0,021	30,71	*
Marital status: divorced (csd)	0,342	0,019	18,02	*
Marital status: single (css)	0,976	0,423	2,30	*
Gender (gen)	0,688	0,232	2,96	*
Age (age)	-0,021	0,001	21,12	*
Area (area)	0,867	0,212	4,09	*
Household income (hi)	1,467	0,441	3,32	*
Expenses incurred (spn)	1,058	0,372	2,84	*
Security (sec)	2,349	0,981	2,39	*
Quality of accommodation services (acc)	0,634	0,054	11,74	*
Higher studies (ehs)	1,263	0,998	1,26	
Secondary education (ese)	2,351	0,887	2,65	*
Basic education (ebe)	0,319	0,452	0,70	
Type of trip. Easter (typ)	-0,665	0,221	-3,00	*
Price of food and accommodation services: expensive (pfce)	-0,893	0,123	-7,26	*
Price of food and accommodation services: expensive (pfcn)	-0,658	0,489	-1,34	
Quality of food services (cf)	2,134	0,331	-6,44	*
Practicing Catholic (prc)	3,771	0,754	5,00	*
No-practicing Catholic (nprc)	1,893	0,482	3,92	*
Other religions (orel)	0,032	0,122	0,26	
Number of processions or Brotherhood houses visited (npbh)	1,458	0,034	42,88	*
Motivation: processions (pro)	2,881	0,834	3,45	*
Motivation: madrugá in Seville (mad)	4,567	1,224	3,73	*
Motivation: jumping the fence in Almonte (jum)	6,789	1,457	4,65	*

McFadden's $R^2 = 0,57$; * significant coefficients at 5%; homoscedastic model, Jarque-Bera test: $p = 0,36$, residue's normality.
Source: own construction.

of the people, the tourism planning and marketing is vital to sensibly manage the resources, avoid any imbalance or wastage and help to preserve the financial, social and environmental benefits of tourism whilst minimising the costs. Knowing the tourist's profile and their level of satisfaction is very important in order to increase the loyalty of tourists and convey a positive image of the destination.

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