

## Rural Tourists and Their Attitudes and Motivations Towards the Practice of Environmental Activities such as Agrotourism

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**ABSTRACT:** Within the broader category of rural tourism, agrotourism is a type of tourism carried out in a very specific environment, mixed livestock and tillage farms. Its importance resides in the fact that it offers the possibility of complementing the income generated by the farm with income generated from tourism while at the same time carrying out an activity that promotes the conservation of nature. Although rural tourism has enjoyed strong growth in European countries such as Spain, the same has not occurred with agrotourism, in spite of the great potential that exists for it. The aim of this paper is to study the attitudes and motivations of tourists to the practice of agrotourism, an activity which has a strong environmental component.

**Key words:** Environment, Rural tourism, Agrotourism, Tourism management, Agricultural diversification, Sustainability

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### INTRODUCTION

In contrast to the generic forms of tourism, in which the motivations involved are very broad, specific forms of tourism have emerged where a particular resource has the ability to capture the interest of a significant group of people. Today tourism is made up of many specific markets, which have found greater profits in segmentation and the reputation they bestow on destinations (Pulido, 2011). Yagüe (2002) notes that from the 1990s new types of tourists began to appear in rural areas. These modern rural tourists care about environmental quality and the search for authenticity. Furthermore, these tourists expect to explore and take full advantage of the landscapes, environmental, natural and architectural resources. According to Molera and Albaladejo (2007) interest in the behavior patterns of these new tourists has led to further research as to the nature, motivations and intentions of rural tourists.

Although it could be argued that rural tourism is that which is practiced in rural areas, there is no consensus on its definition or even on what constitutes a rural area. In addition, because of its versatility and diversity, it is often confused with other concepts such as agrotourism, green tourism, ecotourism or nature tourism. The confusion between these concepts is no surprise given the fact that rural tourism is a diversified industry, which is associated with outdoor activities, a natural environment that is cared for and rural lifestyles

(Frochot, 2005). What is evident, therefore, is a strong environmental component in rural tourism. The importance of rural tourism depends on the resources of the place, its infrastructure, image, market access and the presence of other types of tourism (Kastenholz *et al.*, 1999), for example, agrotourism. Agrotourism is a specific form of tourism within the framework of rural tourism, with a strong environmental component. There are many definitions of the term (Busby and Rendle, 2000), but it can be said that it "is based on the carrying out of the tourist activity on selected farms where the possibility of doing farm work alongside the owners of the farm is offered to the tourists. For the farm owners the tourism is complementary to their main business. Agrotourism is thus a leisure activity, but is also educational in nature, being based on country work and life" (Hernández *et al.*, 2011: 1912). "The benefits produced by agrotourism derive from the possibility of making compatible the income generated by farming with that produced by tourism, in the process developing an educational and leisure activity of interest to many groups such as families, students, students of nature and the environment, etc." (Hernández *et al.*, 2011: 1912). Furthermore the role played by the natural surroundings as the scene for the carrying out this activity is clear (Choo and Jamal, 2009). It is for that reasons it is necessary to work for the sustainable

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development of the agricultural systems concerned, diversifying their economic performance but ensuring their conservation.

The aim of this study is to examine the attitudes and motivations of rural tourists towards the practice of activities with a strong environmental element such as agrotourism. According to Frochot (2005) even though farming and related rural activities are not directly consumed by all visitors to rural areas, they are still probably the central visual and social image of the countryside. For this reason, it was deemed appropriate to test the attitude of rural tourists to agrotourism. These tourists are seen as the main potential market for this practice, because rural tourism is a broader category that includes agrotourism. The idea is to offer a measurement of the viability of this kind of initiative in areas with potential from the point of view of the demand and environmental motivations. This information is essential to implement initiatives tailored to the needs, expectations and requirements of the demand.

There are hardly any studies on the demand for agrotourism, though these are necessary in order for such businesses to succeed (Carpio *et al.*, 2008; Srikatanyoo and Campiranon, 2010), which makes it

necessary to carry out a study of this type (Carpio *et al.*, 2008). In European countries like France, United Kingdom, Austria and Switzerland rural tourism is well established, while in countries like Spain or Portugal it is still in the phase of expansion (Solsona, 2006). It is striking that in the Spanish case, despite the strong development of rural tourism in recent years, agrotourism, except in a few cases, has scarcely been developed. This work presents an empirical study based on surveys of a sample of rural tourists in a Spanish region with the potential to host agrotourism initiatives.

## MATERIALS & METHODS

Effective management and marketing require an understanding of the existence of different market segments (Park and Yoon, 2009). Few studies have looked at the demand profile for rural tourism (e.g. Bote, 1987; Fuentes, 1995; Yagüe, 2002; Albaladejo and Díaz, 2003; Cebrián, 2003; Camargo *et al.*, 2005; Albaladejo *et al.*, 2004; Albaladejo and Díaz, 2009) and, as has already been remarked on, even fewer have examined segment motivations (Kastenholz *et al.*, 1999; Frochot, 2005; Molera and Albaladejo, 2007; Park and Yoon, 2009; Devesa *et al.*, 2010). Table 1 shows the segments identified by studies of this question.

**Table 1. Motivational segmentation studies in rural tourism**

Studies	Geographic scope	Segments	Natural component	Agriculture and rural component
Kastenholz et al. (1999)	Portugal	Want-it-all ruralist	√	√
		Independent ruralist	√	√
		Traditional ruralist	√	√
		Environmental ruralist	√	√
Frochot (2005)**	Great Britain	Actives	√	-
		Relaxers	√	-
		Gazers	√	-
		Rurals	√	√
Molera y Albaladejo (2007)	Spain	Family rural tourists	√	-
		Relax rural tourists	√	-
		Active rural tourists	√	-
		Rural life tourists	√	-
Park y Yoon (2009)	Korea	Tourists of rural accommodation	-	-
		Family togetherness	√	-
		Passive tourist	√	√
		Want-it-all	√	√
		Learning and excitement	√	√
Devesa et al. (2010)	Spain	Visitor looking for tranquility, rest and contact with nature	√	-
		Cultural visitor	√	-
		Proximity, gastronomic and nature visitor	√	-
		Return tourist	√	-

\*\*Considering the benefits sought and the main activities carried out.

Source: Own elaboration

It can be stated on the basis of the studies examined on the motivations for rural tourism that in all or some of the segments identified, the motivations have a strong environmental component (Kastenholz *et al.*, 1999; Frochot, 2005; Molera and Albaladejo, 2007; Park and Yoon, 2009; Devesa *et al.*, 2010), with the desire to participate in and enjoy rural life and activities such as agriculture also being present (Kastenholz *et al.*, 1999; Frochot, 2005; Molera and Albaladejo, 2007; Park and Yoon, 2009). It is therefore clear that rural tourists, on the basis of their motivations related to nature and participation in activities related to rural life and agriculture, are a group with potential to become clients in the context of the development of agrotourism in areas with the potential for it.

Agrotourism is a specific product within the framework of rural tourism. Mediano (2002) indicates the agrotourism is more restricted in nature, given that rural tourism covers all kinds of tourism activity that takes place in the rural environment not only that which takes place on farms, as in the case of agrotourism. The simultaneousness nature of the rural and agricultural activity is the main distinguishing feature of agrotourism. With regard to the benefits of this type of tourism, income from the provision of accommodation combines with that from catering, leisure activities, the sale of food and craft products, etc. This creates a direct, indirect and induced effect in the area that is a boost for the local economy (Hernández *et al.*, 2011). It also encourages the preservation of agricultural systems (Leco and Mateos, 2006), in addition to the landscape as natural and cultural heritage (ethnographic, ethnological, culinary, etc.), thanks to the interaction between human activity and natural resources (González, 1995).

The lack of research on agrotourism has been noted by authors such as Oppermann (1996), Sayadi and Calatrava (2001), Sharpley and Vass (2006) and McGehee (2007). Regarding the profile of these tourists and their demands little is known. Only it is possible to cite the work of Carpio *et al.* (2008), Sidali and Schulze (2010) and Srikatanayoo and Campiranon (2010). The study presented in this paper seeks answers to these questions given the existing gaps in research on agrotourism demand.

Given the nascent state of agrotourism in Spain it was decided that it was more appropriate to examine the attitudes of rural tourists, a broader category which includes agrotourism, towards the diversification of their tourism activities on farms. This information provides a measure of the potential of this kind of tourism from the perspective of the demand, which can be completed with the results produced by Hernández *et al.* (2011) concerning the supply side.

This study was performed in a region of southwestern Europe, which is a predominantly agricultural and farming area, where industry has had little impact. This factor, combined with a low population density, has led to the preservation in the Spanish region of Extremadura of great natural richness, as well as traditional forms of life in its villages. Those factors united to its cultural wealth, have provided a unique framework for the rapid development of rural tourism in this area. Nevertheless, agrotourism has had little impact, despite the great potential for it that exists. In terms of methodology, the personal interview was chosen as a technique, with a structured questionnaire to gather information. The SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences) was used to analyze the information collected. The technical details of this research are presented in Table 2.

**Table 2. Technical specifications**

<i>Universe</i>	Rural tourists in Extremadura
<i>Scope</i>	Extremadura
<i>Method of collecting information</i>	Personal inquiry with structured questionnaire
<i>Database</i>	It doesn't exist
<i>Sampling unit</i>	Rural tourists in Extremadura
<i>Population size</i>	Non defined
<i>Sample size</i>	311
<i>Sampling</i>	Convenience non-probabilistic sample
<i>Fieldwork</i>	January and February 2009
<i>Number of surveys</i>	311
<i>Valid responses</i>	All
Source: Own elaboration	

**RESULTS & DISCUSSION**

The results of the empirical study will now be presented. Firstly, some information on the study sample. Although a convenience sample was used it is worthwhile to offer some ideas regarding the demographic characteristics of the rural tourists who formed part of it. The gender distribution is fairly balanced, since 48.6% of respondents were male and 51.4% female. In terms of age, the largest group was between 25 and 45 years old (59.8%), followed by the group between 45 and 64 (30.5%). Therefore, it can be said that this is a relatively young group, probably with a significant interest in finding out about new rural tourism products, such as agrotourism. 48.6% of those surveyed had higher education and 35.0% secondary education. 14.5% of respondents lived outside the region (see Table 3).

**Table 3. Characteristics of the sample (n=311)**

Variables	Answers	Percentage
Gender	Men	48.6%
	Women	51.4%
Age	Less than 25 years old	5.8%
	Between 25 and 45 years old	59.8%
	Between 45 and 64 years old	30.5%
	More than 65 years old	3.9%
Education level	Primary	16.4%
	Secondary	35.0%
	High	48.6%
Residents lived outside the region	Yes	14.5%
	No	85.2%
	DK/NA	0.3%

Source: Own elaboration

Table 4 provides information on respondents' relationships to tillage and/or livestock farming. 96.5% had no relationship with them at all. However, some of these once had such a relationship as 10.6% had been involved with tillage and livestock farming at some point. 56.6% of respondents said that they know about tillage and livestock farming in Extremadura, thus something more than half of respondents had some interest in these given that they had this knowledge.

Regarding the profile of respondents as rural tourists it can be seen that it is something they do often (82.6%) and 47.6% of the sample do so more than twice a year. There does not seem to be a special preference for a particular time of the year for trips to the countryside, but there was a certain interest in going in the summer (12.2%) (see Table 5). On the basis of this information it can be stated that sample contains, in general, people with a close relationship to the practice of tourism in the rural world and thus a potential market for agrotourism.

Table 6 shows the results regarding the degree of knowledge that these rural tourists have on agrotourism. 50.5% of the sample claimed to know about this kind of tourism. However, most knew no specific details (71.7%), nor had they ever practiced it (88.8%). This could indicate that although it is an activity that is known about and which has achieved remarkable development in some Spanish regions, in others it has only a nascent presence, as is the case of Extremadura. In this regard, one could point to the causes indicated by Sayadi and Calatrava (2001).

It was also considered interesting to ask those in the sample about the benefits which, in their opinion, were received from agrotourism by the areas in which it is carried out (see Table 7). 93.6% were in favor of integrating tillage and livestock farming into the supply of tourism products given that it is good for getting to

know the rural world (40.2%), with this being interesting for various segments such as children and young people, etc. (18.6%), as well as for other reasons (27.8%). There is also a general view regarding the capacity of agrotourism to contribute to increasing the income and quality of life of farm entrepreneurs (88.4%) given that it would increase profits (37.1%) and generate more income (28.0%), among other reasons (22.9%). The results concerning the opinions of these tourists in terms of the contribution of agrotourism to the conservation of farm landscape and rural heritage are remarkable. 92.0% consider that such a contribution is indeed made. They consider it to be an activity that improves their conservation (35.0%) and that promotes awareness and consciousness raising with regard to the environment (23.1%), among other things (25.2%). These data let it be seen that rural tourist is environmentally conscious, and that the agrotourism is a tourist activity that can respond to the environmental motivations of rural tourist.

Table 8 shows the results concerning the attitude of tourists towards the practice of agrotourism. The data seem to be promising. 53.7% stated that they would participate in agricultural activities and 28.9% in only a few, compared with 16.7% indicating they would not. Therefore, it appears that activity aroused interest in the sample of rural tourists surveyed. It is also interesting to know the details of their motivations in terms of nature. These indicate that the preferred landscape for the practice of agrotourism is the mountains (72.0%), followed by landscapes connected with livestock farming (30.5%), vineyards (21.9%) and olive groves (17.0%). With regard to the enjoyment of the landscape and activities related to vineyards and olive groves, it can be stated that these are already recognized forms of tourism with their own supply of tourism products, wine tourism and oleotourism. With regard to the kind of activities these tourists would

**Table 4. Relationship between respondent and tillage and/or livestock farming**

Is a tillage or livestock farmer	Yes	2.2%
	No	96.5%
	DK/NA	1.3%
Has been a tillage or livestock farmer	Yes	10.6%
	No	89.1%
	DK/NA	0.3%
Knows about tillage or livestock farming in Extremadura	Yes	56.6%
	No	43.1%
	DK/NA	0.3%
Source: Own elaboration		

**Table 5. Relationship between respondent and the practice of rural tourism**

Frequently practises rural tourism	Yes	82.6%
	No	16.4%
	DK/NA	1.0%
Number of times per year practiced	Never	9.6%
	Once	22.2%
	Twice	19.6%
	More than twice	47.6%
	DK/NA	1.0%
Time of the year when practiced	Never	9.7%
	When it is possible	2.3%
	Holidays	3.5%
	Spring	6.4%
	Summer	12.2%
	All year	7.1%
	Either	7.4%
	Weekends	5.8%
	Spring and autumn	6.1%
	Others	37.3%
DK/NA	2.2%	
Source: Own elaboration		

**Table 6. Level of knowledge of agrotourism**

Knowledge of agrotourism	Yes	50.5%
	No	49.5%
	DK/NA	0.0%
Knowledge of businesses involved in agrotourism	Yes	28.3%
	No	71.7%
	DK/NA	0.0%
Has practiced agrotourism on a least one occasion	Yes	10.9%
	No	88.8%
	DK/NA	0.3%
Source: Own elaboration		

**Table 7. Benefits of agrotourism**

Interest in the integration of farming in the supply of tourism products	Yes	93.6%	Helps with knowledge of the rural world	40.2%
			Learning	5.2%
			Interesting for all (children, young people...)	18.6%
	No	6.4%	Another tourism possibility	7.2%
			Diversifies	1.0%
			Others	27.8%
DK/NA	0.0%	Not interesting	70.0%	
		Others	30.0%	
Agrotourism contribution to increasing income levels and quality of life of agricultural entrepreneurs	Yes	88.4%	Increases profits	37.1%
			Generates more income	28.0%
			Adds something else	6.9%
	No	10.6%	Others	22.9%
			DK/NA	5.1%
			Lack of assistance	3.0%
DK/NA	1.0%	I don't believe it	36.4%	
		Others	33.3%	
		DK/NA	5.1%	
Agrotourism contribution to the conservation of landscape and rural heritage	Yes	92.0%	Improves conservation	35.0%
			Avoids abandonment	1.7%
			Raises consciousness about the environment	23.1%
			Helps recovery	2.4%
			Educates	2.4%
	No	7.4%	Makes use of resources	0.3%
			Helps maintenance	5.6%
			Others	25.2%
			DK/NA	3.5%
			It's an administrative question	8.7%
DK/NA	0.6%	It doesn't influence	4.3%	
		Others	52.2%	
		DK/NA	34.8%	
Source: Own elaboration				

like to carry out on the farms there are the production of food products (oil, bread, sausage and similar products) (60.8%), collection of wild fruits (mushrooms, asparagus...) (56.0%), reforestation, forest care and conservation of the environment (48.6%), horticulture (32.5%), slaughtering (30.6%), wine (28.3%), and the handling of cattle (28.0%) and horses (24.4%). These results endorse the idea provided by Pulido (2011), which holds that agrotourism has strong links with other specific types of tourism such as gastronomic tourism, mycology, nature, wine and ethno-tourism. Furthermore, these results highlight the environmental concerns of these tourists, as they declare their interest in participating in activities related to nature. The services they would like to have on the farm would be

the catering and accommodation (64.6%), guided tours of the countryside (61.4%), walks organized by the neighboring villages (54.7%) and enjoying the cultural offerings of those villages (45.3%). The interest in nature again appears in the interest shown in guided tours of the countryside.

The above data provides very positive information about the possible development of agrotourism, given that it shows the existence of potential demand. However, these tourists encounter some difficulties in actually practicing it. These are, among other things (18.3%), unfamiliarity with the environment and supply (15.8%) and the lack of information and promotion (13.5%) (see Table 9).

**Table 8. Attitude of the rural tourist to the practice of agrotourism**

Willingness of the tourist to participate in agricultural activities on the farm	Yes	53.7%
	No	16.7%
	Only in a few	28.9%
	DK/NA	0.6%
Preferred landscape for agrotourism	Mountain	72.0%
	Irrigated land	14.2%
	Olive groves	17.0%
	Vineyards	21.9%
	Livestock	30.5%
	Crops	6.7%
	Other	4.8%
Kind of activities the tourist would like to participate in on the farm	Horticulture	32.5%
	Olive production	17.7%
	Wine	28.3%
	Handling of cattle	28.0%
	Handling of bull fighting livestock	13.8%
	Handling of sheep	19.0%
	Handling of goats	15.5%
	Handling of pigs	15.1%
	Handling horses	24.4%
	Reforestation, forest care and conservation of the environment	48.6%
	Preparing products (oil, bread, sausage and similar products)	60.8%
	Slaughtering	30.6%
	Hunting and fishing	15.4%
Collection of wild fruits (mushrooms, asparagus...)	56.0%	
Other activities	3.9%	
Kinds of service the tourist would like to have available on the farm	Just catering	0.6%
	Just accommodation	4.2%
	Catering and accommodation	64.6%
	Guided tours of the countryside	61.4%
	Visits to neighboring villages	54.7%
	Cultural opportunities in neighboring villages	45.3%
	Just live on the holding (share space and experiences)	12.2%
Other services	5.1%	
Source: Own elaboration		

**Table 9. Difficulties for the practice of tourism**

	No difficulty	8.0%	
	Unfamiliarity with the environment and supply	15.8%	
	Comfort/fixtures and fittings	1.6%	
	Lack of supply	7.1%	
	Economic factors	9.0%	
	Lack of infrastructure	3.9%	
Difficulties in the practice of agrotourism, according to the tourist	Lack of information and promotion	13.5%	
	Lack of training	2.6%	
	Lack of time	8.0%	
	Accessibility	2.6%	
	Mentality	2.6%	
	Holidays are for relaxing	5.8%	
	Others	18.3%	
	DK/NA	1.3%	
	Source: Own elaboration		

In short it can be said that there exists a potential market for agrotourism linked to rural tourism, given that tourist survey demonstrated a very positive attitude towards its practice. However, it seems that the lack of information and promotion have led to a lack of knowledge about the possibilities of this sort of tourism. The potential of regions like Extremadura, with strong natural, cultural and farming resources, as destinations for rural tourism practice is remarkable, and there is a demand interested in it. Therefore, joint efforts are required between public and private initiatives for its development and commercialization to take. Furthermore, as these tourists say, this is a type of tourism that contributes to increasing income levels and the quality of life of agricultural employers, and the conservation of landscape and rural heritage. Thus this kind of tourism serves a dual purpose: economic, derived from the importance of supplementing farm income with activities such as tourism, and social, derived from the strengthening of conservation of natural and agricultural environments.

## CONCLUSION

This study has sought to highlight the importance of agrotourism as an activity that responds to an emerging demand interested in enjoying tourist activity in natural and rural areas, and so responds to a demand that has new motivations. This demand seeks more authentic and personalized educational and emotional experiences, in contact with rural roots (Hernández *et al.*, 2011). The regions and public administration have become conscious of the importance of integrating

tourism into farm activities. This produces direct, indirect and induced benefits at the socio-economic and environmental level in the areas where it occurs. However, for this to happen there has to be both a current demand for this kind of tourism and a potential future demand too, to ensure its survival. Also required is a good understanding of this demand (client profiles, needs and motivations, etc.). This is the reason for which this study has been carried out, a study which has examined the attitude and motivations of the rural tourist towards the practice of such environmental activities as agrotourism in areas with the potential for it.

A sample of 311 rural tourists in Extremadura, a Spanish region which, despite its shortage of agrotourism initiatives, has great potential for developing it, due to its natural and cultural wealth and which still maintains a strong farming tradition and agricultural landscapes of interest was carried out. The results paint a very positive picture of the possibilities for the development of agrotourism in Extremadura, given that it illustrates the existence of a potential demand. However, these tourists are faced with certain difficulties when it comes to actually practicing this kind of tourism, related to lack of knowledge of the environment and the existence of such tourism products, as well as lack of information and promotion. In summary, one may say that there exists a potential market for agrotourism linked to rural tourism. The potential of regions with natural, cultural and agricultural wealth as agrotourism destinations is strong, and there is a demand interested in it. Therefore,



joint efforts are required between public and private initiatives for its development and commercialization, working always from the standpoint of sustainability and with respect towards the environment where the activity is being carried out.

The limitations of this study center on the possible errors that could result from the fieldwork, the statistical treatment of the data, and the choice of a convenience sample. This means taking precautions when extrapolating the results shown by research to the population as a whole. Furthermore, this study offers only a partial vision of reality as it only looks at the demand side. It can be appropriately complemented by examining the results of Hernández et al. (2011), which deal with the supply side. As regards future lines of investigation, as Oppermann (1996), Sayadi and Calatrava (2001), Sharpley and Vass (2006) and McGehee (2007) point out, there has been little research on agrotourism, which means that it is necessary to study this type of tourism in more detail in order to better understand all aspects of it. In this particular case the necessity for studies of the demand in order to assure business success (Carpio *et al.*, 2008; Srikatanyoo and Campiranon, 2010).

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