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Hunting tourism in Extremadura: Spanish Monteria

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Resumo

A Extremadura é uma comunidade predominantemente rural, na qual o setor primário representa uma alta importância na economia regional e, o turismo de caça é uma das atividades mais importantes do setor primário na comunidade ao incidir de forma significativa nas áreas mais deprimidas. O principal objetivo deste trabalho é mostrar como o turismo de caça pode apoiar o desenvolvimento rural como um complemento econômico de valor extraordinário e atividade geradora de riqueza e de empregos em diversos setores relacionados com a caça. A modalidade objeto de estudo é a Caça Espanhola, uma das mais atrativas para os turistas de caça nacionais e internacionais. A metodologia de trabalho consiste em uma análise descritiva por meio de entrevistas pessoais com as empresas que organizam as caças e turistas de caça. Os resultados obtidos indicam que é uma atividade turística com um elevado gasto médio por parte dos turistas, o que repercute em distintos setores.

Palabras Clave: Extremadura, Turismo de caça, Turistas de caça, Caça espanhola

Abstract

Extremadura is an eminently rural community, and the primary sector has a high importance in the regional economy. Hunting tourism is one of the most important activities of the primary sector in the community, and it affects very significantly the most depressed areas. The main objective of this research is to show how the hunting tourism can support rural development as an economic complement of extraordinary value and wealth-generating and jobs-creating activity in different sectors related to the hunting. The hunting modality studied in this article is the Spanish Monteria, one of the most attractive ways of hunting for national and international hunting tourists. The methodology of this research consists in a descriptive analysis through personal interviews of companies organizing the hunting in the region and of hunting tourists coming to the region. The final results show that this one is an activity with high average spending per tourist, and with a high level of impact on different sectors.

Keywords: Extremadura, Hunting tourism, Hunting tourist, Spanish Monteria

Introduction

Hunting tourism is one of the oldest types of tourism in the world, due to the fact that hunting made our ancestors move from one side to another looking for food. Over time, this activity lost its food component, but it still has a big number of followers all over the world. There are about seven millions and a half of hunters in Europe (FACE, 2010) who travel to other countries and from one region to another inside their countries with the aim to hunt. Despite this huge market of hunting tourists, this activity has been studied in Europe basically from the veterinary and biological point of view, carrying out some studies about hunting diseases (Pagés-Manté y Llopart, 1995, Habela *et al.*, 2001; Hermoso de Mendoza, 2004), repopulation of wild species (Soriguer *et al.*, 1998), catch performance (Farfán *et al.*, 2004), hunting distribution (Camiña, 1994; Vargas *et al.*, 2004).

Hunting tourism is a kind of sport tourism in the rural areas, appeared as a consequence of concern for endangered animals as a result of uncontrolled hunting. Hunting tourism was created as an alternative to this, offering a possibility to hunt without damaging the wildlife, due to the fact that hunted species are reproduced in a controlled way.

This work is to study hunting tourism in Extremadura and Spanish Monteria in particular and its importance for the touristic sector of the region. Hunting tourism in Extremadura has a long historical tradition; this region together

with Andalusia and Castilla-La Mancha are the areas of the Iberian Peninsula with the highest level of the hunting activity. Hunters from other regions or countries (hunting tourists) apart from the hunting activity use the services of hotels and restaurants, regional infrastructures, complementary services, as, for example, taxidermy, armories, etc. All this has a direct positive impact on the regional economy.

Hunting tourist in this kind of trips looks for a direct contact with nature, discovering new ecosystems and habitats, contacting with other cultures and learning their ways of hunting, and enjoying his hobby looking for a determined trophy.

Hunting tourists who practice big game can hunt in Extremadura Spanish ibex, mouflon, fallow deer, red deer, wild boar and barbary sheep. That means that here you can find 6 of 9 big game species living in Spain. Moreover, Gredos ibex is considered to be the best Spanish ibex, due to the lyre shape of its horns, unlike two other Spanish subspecies. 5 of the species listed above can be hunted during a Monteria, including barbary sheep, a specie possessed by few Spanish hunting domains.

Spanish Monteria

We have focused our work on Spanish Monteria, because this big game hunting attracts tourists with high and medium-high purchasing power, being Extremadura one of the best Spanish regions to hunt this way. The Monteria is the most traditional way of big game

hunting in Spain. It consists in surrounding a hunting ground with different lines of hunters and hunting it with dogs, making wild animals go where the hunters are. Each group of dogs is called “*rehala*”, and they hunt all the area leading animals towards the hunters. There is normally between 40 and 70 hunters and 10-25 “*rehalas*”, about 20 dogs each one. Each “*rehala*” is run by one or two guides.

A high number of enterprises take part in Monteria’s organization. On the first place, shops, hotels and catering companies are involved. We can highlight rural pubs where the hunters have their breakfast before the draw of hunting positions; hotels and country houses, cause there normally are two Monterias during a weekend, so hunters from other regions and countries stay the whole weekend in the region; and, finally, catering companies, serving meal and drinks after the hunt. In addition to it, dogs’ guides, car rental companies (you have to collect all the hunted animals at the end of hunting), mules’ owners (they help to collect hunted animals from inaccessible areas) are involved. Finally, we cannot leave out taxidermy services.

Day laborers are also employed: guides who accompany hunters to their positions are called “*postores*”. Furthermore, these “*postores*” are in charge of distributing animal feed before the hunting season starts with the aim to attract animals to the hunting ground. Analyzing the number of persons, involved in the process of organization of Monterias, we can see that hunting is a job-creating activity in rural areas, leading to its development and promoting

the future opportunities. Nowadays, this last point is a quite important objective due to the growing problem of land abandonment, caused by the mass migration of the population of the rural areas to the cities.

We have to add to this data other movements of capital taking place in the field of hunting tourism, as, for example, equipment and arms selling, payment of hunting licenses, sale of petrol and diesel to the tourists coming from other regions and countries by car, services of hunting dogs handlers, advertisement and mass media. Once the Monteria is concluded, other benefited sector is the meat sector; most of meat is exported abroad.

Methodology

During the hunting season of 2012-2013 was carried out a fieldwork with the application of 380 questionnaires, filled in by both Spanish and foreign hunters were collected in Monterias, organized in the province of Caceres. We focused our study in this province because, comparing it with the Badajoz one, stood out by the small game, this one is distinguished by the big game, specially by the Spanish Monteria. The questionnaire collects information about hunting tourists’ profile, hunting tourist destinations, about the province of Caceres as a hunting destination, and about expenses of this kind of tourists. We will focus this study on the hunting tourists’ profile and on the economic aspect of this activity.

After all the information had been collected, a simple data analysis, using the SPSS program, was carried out.

Hunting outfitters of the region were also interviewed, in order to estimate an average expenditure of the organization of a Monteria and to detect all the involved participants.

Results

First of all, we were interested in a profile of hunting tourists who choose Extremadura as a tourist destination. Statistical analysis of 380 questionnaires showed that an average hunting tourist coming to Extremadura are man from an urban area, with 36-55 years old, a university degree, self-employed, with more than 48 thousand Euros of annual income.

Table 1 shows the results about the first five places of provenance of the hunting tourists.

We have divided Extremadura into provinces, because we are interested in figure out how many persons come from the province of Badajoz. This way they leave their usual environment and become hunting tourists. 4.4% of all the interviewed tourists said "Extremadura" without specifying the province. As a result, we can say that 56.3% of all the hunting tourists come from outside Extremadura, being foreigners 5.3% of them. 3.2% of the hunting tourists are French tourists, and 1.2% are Portuguese. Other nationalities are below 1%.

Regarding economic expenditure, the price per one post in a Monteria, diary travelling costs, expenses for taxidermy and annual expenses for buying equipment and ammunition have been analyzed (see tables 2 and 3).

38.4% of the interviewed hunting tourists spend more than 500 Euros for buying equipment and ammunition per year.

Talking about expenses for taxidermy, we would like to mention that there are three kinds of trophies: skull cap, skull with mandible and shoulder mount. Skull cup costs about 50 Euros per trophy, skull with mandible costs about 80-100 Euros per trophy and shoulder mount costs from 300 till 500 Euros per trophy, depending on the animal. In wild boar's case, there are only two kinds of trophies: tusks (about 70 Euros per trophy) and shoulder mount (300-500 Euros per trophy). Taxidermy costs depend on the trophy's quality and its quantity at the end of a Monteria. So the costs, mentioned by the hunters, are approximate, because the result of each Monteria is different.

Analyzing the answers, done by the regional outfitters, we can distinguish the following results:

First of all, the outfitter has to rent a hunting area, which costs about 3-25 thousand Euros, depending on the surface and the hunting modality which is going to be practiced.

Food for animals is dropped in the hunting ground from summer till the day when the Monteria is organized in order to attract them to the area. Food cost is about 2000-2500 Euros per hunting ground.

The draw of the hunting positions is held after breakfast the day when a Monteria is organized. Persons who guide all the hunters to their positions receive an average of 70 Euros per day. Normally 6-8 guides are requested for a

Monterias with 45-60 hunters. Some more expensive Monterias offer also a service of secretaries who are on the same position with a hunter, advising them to shoot or not, depending on the quality of a possible trophy.

When all the hunters are on their positions, dogs start to hunt. They run through all the hunting area looking for animals and driving them to the hunters' positions. One group of dogs consists on 15-20 dogs of different breeds, as hounds, mastiffs or Spanish bulldogs. About 8-20 groups of dogs take part in a Monteria, depending on the surface of the hunting ground. 200 Euros are paid per day per each group.

When the Monteria is finished, guides pick up the hunters and drive them to the area where the lunch is served. Most of the outfitters engage the services of a catering company, although there are some of them who have their own facilities. Catering costs are about 1300-1500 Euros per Monteria. Typical meal for a Monteria in Extremadura is chickpeas, beans, meat and local cheese.

Before the hunters leave their positions and go to have a lunch, they have to mark with a visible sign all the hunted animals. So while they are having their lunch, guides go through all the hunting area, picking up the hunted animals with 4X4 cars. About 4 cars are needed, the rental price is 200 Euros per day per car.

When the meat quality is approved by the veterinary, infected meat is carried to an area, where it must be burnt or buried with caustic soda. Healthy meat is sold to the meat-processing companies. An average price is 1,80 Euros per one kilo

of red or fallow deer meat, and 1-1,5 Euros per one kilo of wild boar meat.

This way we can see how many different companies and employees are involved in the organization of a Monteria: catering companies from the region, guides and secretaries living in the neighborhood, dogs' guides, mules' owners, taxidermists and butchers. Also we have to mention translators who go to the Monterias with foreign hunting tourists and who are paid from 50 till 100 Euros per hunt; cameramen, if a hunter wants to have a professional report about his hunt; and other possible employees needed to give some special service.

Conclusions

1. Hunting tourism is considered as a type or a tourism product, contributing to the development of rural areas, increasing economic growth, encouraging job creation and having a positive impact on the regional economy. This kind of tourism is very important for Extremadura, especially for the province of Caceres, due to the significant revenue generated annually and to the attraction of the region for hunting tourists, both Spanish and foreigners.

2. Multiple sectors are benefited by hunting tourism, generating revenues in the hospitality and transport industries, complementary services, as, for example, taxidermy, equipment and arms selling, hunting dogs selling, game farms and so on.

3. This activity can be viable in the long term and produce economic benefits, reducing depression level in rural areas, if it is intelligently managed.

4. Hunting tourism is a strong sector in the regional economy of Extremadura, but at the moment it is not well studied and positioned. Its importance is not known by local society, and this factor is not seriously considered as a way to change the image of Extremadura, called in Spain “a big incognito”. This sector is a traditional one, and it has an important future, if it goes on increasing and benefiting the economic development of Extremadura.

5. Spanish Monteria is a hunting modality which has a lot of followers, both Spanish and foreigners. More than a half of all the hunters come from outside Extremadura. This region starts to be positioned as a hunting destination at global level; some of the local outfitters take part annually in international hunting shows in France, Germany, Austria, Russia and the USA, promoting Spanish Monteria and hunting tourism in the region.

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Table 1

Provenance of hunting tourists of the province of Cáceres

Provenance of the tourists	%
Province of Cáceres	26.7%
Madrid	21.4%
Castilla y León	14.1%
Province of Badajoz	12.6%
Castilla-La Mancha	5.0%

Source: Own elaboration

Table 2

Prices per post in a Monteria

Prices per post	%
Less than 500 Euros	62.8%
From 500 till 1500 Euros	25.8%
From 1500 till 3000 Euros	6.0%

Source: Own elaboration

Table 3

Diary costs of travelling, taxidermy, accommodation and meals

Diary cost	%
Less than 200 Euros	59.0%
From 200 till 400 Euros	33.8%

Source: Own elaboration