

RESPONSIBLE TOURISM AS AN INSTRUMENT FOR LOCAL DEVELOPMENT: A CASE STUDY TO ANALYZE THE MAIN MOTIVATIONS FOR TOURISTS

Laura Fuentes-Moraleda

Ana Muñoz-Mazón

Sara Rodríguez-Izquierdo

Universidad Rey Juan Carlos. Madrid
laura.fuentes@urjc.es, ana.munoz@urjc.es

Over the past 50 years, the tourism industry has been characterized by rapid growth, establishing itself as a key pillar in the economy for many countries. On the international scene and in the face of a “new” demand for unique experiences, “new” models of supply have emerged, among which are those that promote tourism as a tool for local development on the premises of sustainability (understood as the generation of lower environmental and socio-cultural impact and with economic benefits to the host communities). Under this paradigm, new initiatives have emerged such as responsible tourism, fair tourism, eco tourism, ecotourism, volunteerism and solidarity brigades. All of them framed within a responsible tourism that respects the environment, culture and society in which they develop, and where tourists play a different role.

Responsible tourism is a phenomenon that reinforces local identities and cultures, strengthens community participation and encourages the understanding, knowledge and mutual learning among tourists and residents. This type of tourism is perceived as a means for exchange of solidarity and outlines a valid strategy to be incorporated into the processes of sustainable development of destinations. The activity related to responsible tourism has increased significantly since the seventies and the offer is highly heterogeneous, which makes the products different in their content and spatial distribution. Travel is flexible and not standardized, and while its programming usually responds to the concerns and preferences of travelers, it mainly caters to the needs of host communities. Normally, they all follow a common standard of respect for local populations. The main features include (i) training prior to travel, (ii) integration of visits to development projects and solidarity organizations, (iii) use of local tourist services, (iv) price transparency as a basic principle, (v) small number of participants per trip and (vi) concentration of journeys to Southern countries.

This paper aims to explore the motivations of tourists when making solidarity trips abroad, based on analysis of the information of individuals who have made responsible

travel through a Spanish NGO. It also aims to deepen the knowledge about motivation of solidarity tourists in Spain and provide further knowledge in this area, given that most studies in the area have been conducted in countries with a long history in this area (Australia, Britain and Italy, among others). The methodology of the paper is divided into two phases, a first one qualitative and a second one, quantitative. The research is approached from a case study of a Spanish non-profit organization and through a database provided by them. The **main results of the quantitative study** conducted in this research have been divided into four blocks: (i) the profile of the surveyed group, (ii) characteristics of the trip, (iii) motivation and (iv) satisfaction.

- (i) The surveyed group: In the study sample, 80% were women, aged (in 86% of cases) between 26 and 40 years (average: 32.67, SD.: 5.06) and 98.8% Spanish nationality. It is dominated by single travelers (65.2%) and highly educated (66.8% of respondents have a college education). 83.6% of respondents had participated only once on a trip with solidarity motivation, while 16.4% had previously made solidarity tourism motivation.
- (ii) Characteristics of the trip: The period chosen by most of the tourists coincided with the holiday travel period, so that 35.2% of tourists have made the trip in August, followed by July with 23.6%. In 34.4% of cases, travel has had an average duration of 4 weeks, followed by 25.2% in the solidarity trip has lasted more than four weeks. As for the main activity in the destination, most respondents (84%) responded “activities with children” followed by “tours around the region” by 19% of respondents. The behavior of men and women regarding activities at destination did no present significant differences.
- (iii) Motivations: The highest rating was for the variable “Being able to interact with other cultures of different countries” with a mean of 4.668 (SD = 0.65). Also with an important evaluation were “An opportunity that enriches me as a person” with an average of 4,568 (SD = 0.72) and “A different experience I’ve always wanted to make” with an average of 4,428 (SD = 0.84). The attributes less valued by respondents have been “promoted by religious motivations” with a mean score of 1.308 (SD = 0.75), “I think the skills and knowledge you gain after the experience can serve me for my professional development” with a average 1,896 (SD = 1.06), and “Because my family has always been involved in aspects of solidarity and support” with a mean of 2.152 (SD = 1.15).
- (iv) Satisfaction: The assessment about satisfaction of respondents was high, 4.05 points out of 5 (SD: 0.964) and the 97.6% of respondents would repeat the experience of solidarity based travel, while 2.4% would not. In addition, 96.8% would recommend solidarity trips to others.

The **first conclusion** of this work is related to the concept of responsible tourism. Responsible tourism can be defined as the type of tourism conducted by travelers whose main motivation is the practice of solidarity in an altruistic way, travelling to another destination in their own country or abroad. We can identify different forms of solidarity tourism (field work, solidarity camps, international volunteering, etc.), nonetheless, all

of these forms have solidarity as the main driver of motivation (being able to understand solidarity as cooperation, awareness, help, volunteer work to the community, etc.) and are performed during vacational periods of the participants.

The **second conclusion** of the study is related to the motivations related to responsible tourism. The results show that the interaction with other cultures of different countries and personal enrichment are the main motivations of people who undertake trips motivated by solidarity. This indicates that for those communities or populations that include this kind of activity as an engine of local development, it would be interesting to develop activities that allow tourists to interact with their culture, traditions and way of life as this is an opportunity that enriches them as people. Living an experience that is different to anything else that they can live in any other “conventional” journey, along with the feeling of doing something to help others, are clearly distinguishing aspects that define this type of travel and support the decision on making the trip.

The **third conclusion** is related to the main activities carried out during the visit of the destination; most survey respondents (84%) carried out activities with children, due to the nature of the projects, followed by tours around the region (19% of respondents). This data reflects the need by travellers to visit the main attractions of the area, which can result in initiatives led by local entrepreneurs that provide service to tourists. Thus, if the service is rendered by the members of the community, the community will benefit directly. The provision of these services requires specific training of young people in professions such as tour guides or in hospitality, which provides them with the knowledge and the ability to know more about their own most attractive customs, the gastronomy and history, which can then be transmitted to tourists. Nowadays there are several initiatives both in Spain and abroad involving tourists in growing different food crops, medical plants, food processing, production of handicrafts, in the care of animals, which results beneficial to both the tourists and the community (economic, social and environmental).

