

VISITORS' PROFILE IN SANTIAGO DE COMPOSTELA: TRADITION AND PRESENT

Yamilé Pérez Guilarte

Rubén Camilo Lois González

Universidad de Santiago de Compostela
yamile.perez@rai.usc.es, rubencamilo.lois@usc.es

Santiago de Compostela is an important cultural destination, not only for its condition as a World Heritage Site, but for being since medieval times the goal of the Camino de Santiago, one of the main routes of Christian pilgrimage. It has a consolidated international image around the religious heritage, although in recent years tourism managers have promoted alternatives such as gastronomic tourism, event tourism or idiomatic tourism. Santiago de Compostela is the eighth most competitive destination among the most successful 20 in Spain (Exceltur, 2013). However, to remain competitive in today's global scenario it is necessary to revitalise tourist destinations according to the visitor's needs.

The knowledge of the profile of people visiting a destination not only enables to direct supply to their expectations, but also customises the advertising and marketing actions in the segments of interest. For understanding demand and market attributes, it is important the knowledge of demographic characteristic, which take into account social and socio-economic aspects such as age, gender, employment, marital status, education and income. Also, it is essential the understanding of issues related to how visitors organise their trip, motivations for travelling, most preferred activities, their image of the city, and their satisfaction with the tourist experience.

In this regard, the Association for Tourism and Leisure Education (ATLAS) is a worldwide reference due to its effort to go into detail about the study of visitors in cultural destinations. The programme began in Europe and in collaboration with various institutions and researchers has been extended to countries around the world, enabling more than 40,000 surveys (ATLAS, 2015). The aim of this article is to know the profile of the visitor who comes to Santiago de Compostela and compare it to other cultural destinations in the world, based on the results of ATLAS. It also delves into the visitor's interest for cultural activities that involve more active participation in the tourist experience. This could be framed in what has been described as a creative tourism (Richards and Raymond, 2000; UNESCO, 2006), which covers activities such as a gastronomic workshop or a visit to an artisan production process. Creative tourism embraces the creation of experiences and

the active involvement of customers in the production of these experiences (Wurzburger et al., 2008). Beyond the elements that have been previously entered in cultural tourism circuits what creative tourists consume is the local way of life, that is, everyday life (Richards, 2012). In fact, it is about consuming culture, but in a more participatory manner (interaction, learning, development). In this regard, this article discusses how this phenomenon is expressed in people who visit Santiago de Compostela.

Considering the relevance of the research developed by ATLAS in the study of cultural demand, this work was based on the same methodological basis. Besides being a validated questionnaire, its use allowed us to compare the results obtained in this study with those of ATLAS or other researchers who have used this methodology. To suit the objective of this research it was adapted from the last version published by ATLAS Europe in 2007 (www.tram-research.com/atlas/survey2007.htm). One of the changes proposed in the questionnaire is the separation of creative tourism and educative tourism when studying motivations, thus allowing deepen in the dimension of creative tourism in the destination. In this regard, a nominal closed question of multiple choices was incorporated to know the extent to which visitors performed creative activities and what were the most popular. The relation between this group of visitors and those who rated their vacation as creative is also incorporated. Among the creative activities included we can mention: gastronomic workshops; blind dinners; tastings; workshops of painting, crafts, literature; and visits to artisan studios or productive activities. Similarly, the questionnaire introduces a question that had already been considered in the version of ATLAS 2004, concerning the authenticity of the image of the city and its cultural attractions.

The universe under study is composed of visitors to Santiago de Compostela, both tourists and excursionists, national and international. However, pilgrims were not selected for this study. At present the phenomenon of pilgrimage and tourism are increasingly converging, because the old religious motivation has lost prominence and coexists with secular motivations, appearing tourist pilgrims (Lois and Lopez, 2012). However, generally speaking pilgrims present a different profile from other visitors, as for example the way they organise the trip and its behaviour in the city. For instance, they travel less in family, often they do not stay overnight or stay for less time, stay in hostels or pensions, make fewer purchases. Consequently, they spend less than the rest of visitors at the destination (Santos, 2006; Santos and Lois, 2011). It should also be noted that the volume of pilgrims arriving in the city is actually a small part of total visitors (Santos, 2006), albeit constituting an element of uniqueness for the destination. These reasons led to the decision to exclude the pilgrims of the sample, thus avoiding a bias that would preclude the comparison of these results with other non-pilgrimage cultural destinations in the world.

The surveys were conducted during the months of July and August 2013, as a period of great flow of visitors. However, they were distributed to be done both weekends and weekdays. An error level of 4.9% was established and for a 95% of confidence the sample size was estimated at 400. Persons were interviewed through a simple random sampling. When intercepting individuals they were asked if their main reason for visiting the city was the pilgrimage, and only if they responded negatively we proceeded to conduct the survey. Most of the respondents preferred to answer the questionnaire on their own (95%),

which was possible because it was translated into five languages: Spanish, English, Italian, French and Portuguese. For people travelling in groups only a questionnaire was applied, choosing the person who was closest to have a birthday.

The main tourist attractions of the city are: the Cathedral and its surroundings, the historical and artistic heritage and the whole of the historic city. Considering this fact, the old town and its surrounding area was established to develop the field work. In this context, we interviewed individuals strolling through the streets or resting in squares (65%), and those who visited a museum, a historic building, a cultural exhibition (21%), or were enjoying the tourist train (14%).

The results reveal a traditional middle-aged cultural tourist who travels for vacation. The increase of youth in the total volume of visitors that has been evident in world tourism, as stated by ATLAS and the World Tourism Organisation is not observed in Santiago. This fact makes us reflect on the need to reformulate the offer of the city to capture the youth market, and design a promotion policy that achieves this segment. The proportion of women is higher than men, similar behaviour to the results achieved by ATLAS and other authors. Regarding the origin, the most important international markets are Germany, France, the UK and Portugal, although the latter is more associated with excursionists. However, the high dependence of the Spanish market, which represents more than half of total visitors, is maintained.

As in most destinations, the holidays are the main reasons to visit Santiago de Compostela. Despite being a cultural destination, visitors travelling to enjoy a cultural attraction or attend a cultural event (culturally motivated tourists) represent a small portion. It is clear that most of the tourists travel by recreational and leisure reasons, at the expense of deep learning experiences, although most visitors are involved in varying degrees in cultural activities. From this result, it could be understandable the need to adapt the traditional cultural supply to this search of recreational experiences that visitors demand nowadays. In this sense, we must say that although museums have gain popularity in recent years, in Santiago they have a lesser role than in other cultural destinations studied by ATLAS. This can be an indication of the need to revitalise the museum offer as required by the current demand.

Historic architecture remains the most novel aspect of Compostela landscape for visitors, but also we must highlight the high valuation given to the ambiance of the place, the food and hospitality of the population. These latter elements are being taken into account for many cultural destinations to revitalise and adapt the supply to new visitor's expectations. This way, different initiatives are proliferating, as for example, to know the essence of the cities rather than the tourist areas, to experience the lifestyles and habits together with residents, or to learn traditional skills with the artisans. In the case of Santiago, visitors identified the gastronomic tour as the main attraction. Besides that, they mentioned visits to production activities and artisan studios; and workshops. However, in Santiago is not possible to deepen in the dimension of the creative tourism, due to these types of activities are designed especially for groups and they are one-time events, mainly gastronomic. This paper shows how the historical heritage of Santiago de Compostela remains as its main attraction, but at the same time how a creative ambiance, around more recreational and participatory activities is demanded at present.

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