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Forest tourism in the Camino de Santiago. The case of Galicia (Spain)

1. INTRODUCTION

When studying the Camino de Santiago, the starting point should be the cultural tourism or the cultural religious tourism. Without entering into the polysemic analysis of the Camino de Santiago itself, what is clear it combines a series of characteristics that go beyond religious tourism, terminology with which it was defined from different sciences and, despite the linking of religious tourism with the awakening of post-fordist tourism (Llurdés, 1995; Esteve, 2001 and 2002; Cànoves, 2006 and 2011; Gil de Arriba, 2006; Andrés and Espejo, 2006; Villa, 2006; Santos, 2002 and 2006; Maak, 2009; Canoves and Blanco, 2011; and Cànoves, 2011). In fact, religious tourism is considered a tourist trip where the religious element is one of the main objectives. Traditional reasons for tourism such as: moving, resting, discovering new landscapes, meeting new people, etc., are added qualitatively to new ones (Fernández de Paz, 2006). However, at present, the evidence is that a pilgrim may be as interested in visiting a church as a tourist may be, so that religious tourism is considered as a subset of cultural tourism.

At the same time, one of the conclusions in which the works centered on the Camino de Santiago coincide, is that displacements related to religious pilgrimages and cultural tourism are one of the most popular products in Europe and Spain (Nolan, M. And Nolan, 1992; Santos, 1999; Lois and Somoza, 2003; Santos and Lois, 2011; Lois and López, 2012; Lois and Santos, 2014). As well as destinations clearly related to a religious space, it is easy to identify them with the perception of religious cultural

tourism. But it is increasingly difficult to know the motives of the visitors to that place, as they mix the authentic pilgrims who visit the place moved by the faith, the tourists who take advantage of the visit to approach the religious place and the tourists who visit the place with a patrimonial and cultural motivation, outside the religious fact. Reality that with the passage of the years has happened with the pilgrims that moves to the city of Santiago de Compostela.

The Camino de Santiago has its origins in the 9th century when it was discovered and recognized what were considered the remains of the body of the Apostle Santiago. The dissemination of this news gave rise, in the following centuries, to an intense process of pilgrimage from all corners of Europe (Santos, 2006; Lois and López, 2012).

Throughout its history the Camino de Santiago has gone through very different situations. From its time of greater glory in the middle ages it went to a long period of decadence. In fact, it will be necessary to arrive at the nineteenth century, in its second half, to see how the Jacobean phenomenon acquires new protagonist. In the hand of events such as the new exhibition of the remains of the apostle or the entrance on the scene of the sanctuary of Lourdes in France, this “revitalizes” the pilgrimages. In the twentieth century, after the Spanish Civil War, a new historical period began in which the meaning of the apostle Santiago acquires a prominent role in gathering the ideals of Spanish nationalism. However, it is from the holy year of 1954, with the political and economic situation more stabilized, when they begin to make greater

efforts regarding the Camino de Santiago. Although it was not until the holy year of 1965 when tourism began to be effectively one of the dominant activities linked to the Camino. Firstly, there was the first mass influx of the contemporary era, which meant the creation of special accommodation, the opening of new hotels, the urban transformation of the city, the inauguration of the bus station and the improvement of the airport. In the following holy year, 1971, the most outstanding fact was the implantation of the Compostela (document that certifies the realization of the route Jacobea and therefore the characterization of the figure of the pilgrim and the beginning of the statistical series on its affluence. In the case of the Compostela, the pilgrim is the person who, following any of the traditional routes thus recognized, walks at least 100 kilometers (or 200 if he does so horse or bicycle.) The two following Jacobean years, 1976 and 1982, were marked by historical events: the change of political regime and the construction of a democratic and decentralized state. In 1985 UNESCO recognizes the city of Santiago de Compostela as a world heritage site, joining a few years later the French road itself at the end of the 1980s, when tourism entered the Galician political agenda. From different regional administrations the economic potential that this route could generate within the Galician territory was detected. At that time, milestones were created, such as the celebration of the massive papal act, which served as a stimulus for the tourist take-off that occurred in 1993.

The holy year of 1993 represented the “new” tourism that the administration wanted for Galicia. The Camino de Santiago became the star element, the routes were improved, hostels were opened and rural tourism houses were inaugurated, hotels and, above all, it was accompanied by a strong promotion campaign. At the time an institutional framework was created around tourism and the Jacobean among which are Turgalicia, S.A. For the Management of the Xacobeo or the Consortium of the City of Santiago de Compostela (although they have undergone modifications since its inception, they are currently maintained).

The holy years act as authentic catalysts not only for the attraction of visitors but also for the growth and development of the sector. The figures for 1993 and 1999, 2004 or 2010 show the effect of this event, although it seems that as we move forward over time this influence is less and less. The presence of pilgrims has multiplied steadily throughout this period, although their numerical total is still small relative to the global number of tourists. In any case, it should be pointed out that the tourist

consolidation of the Jacobean route does not only affect the increase of walkers, but especially about the frequentation of the destination of Galicia and particularly about Santiago de Compostela.

In short, the pilgrimages to Santiago de Compostela take on great importance. However, they present changes; today they are clearly a tourism product phenomenon in which religion is becoming less relevant. In fact according to the data of 2013, the reason for the pilgrimage is divided into: 54.5% in religious and other, 40% only religious and 5.5% non-religious. Although most significant is to see how that year came pilgrims from more than 140 countries, representing the 5 continents. Even from the Archdiocese of Compostela, it is stated that in October 2014, the majority of pilgrims are foreigners and from “exotic” origins, such as Singapore, Swaziland, Lebanon, Myanmar, Zimbabwe, Ethiopia or Sudan. 62% of the total (Pilgrim’s Reception Office, 2015). Therefore, it is considered important to be able to link other tourism products that can complement the Camino de Santiago, such as, among others, forest tourism.

Before making a brief introduction of the characteristics of the forest tourism, to clarify that in this work it is posed and focused as a complementary tourism product of the Way of Santiago. Despite the potential and attractiveness of tourists that tourism has as main activity (Miramontes, 2015).

2. THE ELEMENTS OF CONSUMPTION IN THE GALLEGOS MOUNTAINS

From an overview, forest tourism can be included as a recreational activity within ecotourism or nature tourism. In turn, ecotourism can be defined as the set of tourism activities that are based on nature, where visitors move to certain territories with the pretension of appreciating their natural wealth and landscape. In 1965 tourism in nature was based on: respect for local culture and population, investment of benefits to the local population, reduced environmental impacts and high visitor satisfaction (Langoya and Long, 1997; Leslei, 2003, Ministry of Industry, Tourism and Trade, 2004). A few years later, in 1987, ecotourism was defined as: “traveling to natural areas without pollution with the specific objective of studying, admiring and enjoying both the landscape and its plants and animals, and the existing cultural manifestations (past and present) that are found in these areas” (Buendía and Colino, 2001). However, forest tourism goes beyond what is a walk through a mountain, because it involves

enjoying unique trees, participate in socio-cultural activities, as well as know the life of the local population of these territories. Within Galicia, we can see that there are a number of areas with great natural potential worthy of being “used” from the tourist point of view, among which stand out their mountains, their monumental trees or the forest landscapes, which in turn are close Or are part of the Camino de Santiago routes. All this despite the strong impact of urban growth in certain areas, the proliferation of nonspecific tree masses, the construction of communication routes or the contamination of certain river courses.

Ecotourism within its characteristics possesses a potential capacity. For its development it needs the three premises that are included within the “sustainable tourism”: environmental (because without natural resources conserved ecotourism does not exist), social (it must help the populations in which it is developed), economics of life of the country and of the areas where it takes place) (Regueiro, 1994; Barroso and Flores, 2003; Montiel, 2003). Forestry tourism therefore aims to enjoy natural resources, but to help the community from the socio-economic point of view. This objective is reflected in the different studies of dynamization of the Camino de Santiago. These three aspects of sustainability, focused on forest tourism as a main tourist activity but with direct application to a development as a complementary activity of the Camino de Santiago (Lage, 2003; Ortega, 2004; Rodríguez, 2004, Araque, 2005).

From the environmental point of view, forest tourism can be very effective as a conservationist of the environment. In fact, species and sites are being protected throughout the world thanks to the income that tourists make after their contemplation and experience (Buendía and Colino, 2001; Leslei, 2003; Montiel, 2003, Ministry of Industry, Tourism and Commerce, 2004). But, like all tourist activities, it can have negative environmental impacts. Among the damages to ecotourism are: disruptions to fauna and flora, pollution, erosion, intentional alteration of natural resources (the ecotourist causes an expenditure of resources - water, energy - that needs to be considered) and certain impacts Visual and acoustic.

From the social point of view, forest tourism can bring many benefits to the local population, such as money, employment or infrastructure. But it can also cause inconveniences by adulterating the idiosyncrasies of the local inhabitants.

From an economic point of view, forestry tourism is already an important source of income in countries such as Mexico, Peru, Argentina, Costa Rica and China,

which see in this activity a way of conserving their nature and at the same time obtaining important resources and benefits (Employment, infrastructure or GDP growth) (Theophile, 1996). Income from ecotourism in its different varieties should help the State in general, but also the region where it is or the local area, both to contribute to its conservation and to benefit the population by its proximity to a space conditioned for your tourist enjoyment.

Therefore, in this point, it can be indicated that forest tourism is an activity that as a central element has the mountain in which tourists will realize their routes, the contemplation of the landscape, the coexistence with the local population that so much bondage had with These areas throughout history, the knowledge of the forest culture, the economic activities that were developed and developed in the mountains, etc. But it should be emphasized that forestry tourism goes beyond the mountain itself, since the sight of certain monumental trees, lodging in rural tourism houses and, at certain moments, approach the mountains or unique forest areas, or attend To an environmental education centre to listen to the peculiarities and socio-cultural functions of the mountains, the collection of mushrooms or chestnuts, is also forest tourism. In addition all these activities can be realized by the pilgrims who carry out the different routes of the Way of Santiago.

In Galicia, there is a clear potential for developing forest tourism because the mountain occupies an important place in its culture and its history, providing a wide range of goods and services for the whole society. The use of the forest and the forest culture are closely linked to the identity of the territory and the community (Bouhier, 1979 and 1984; Prada, 1991; Fernández, 1990; Balboa, 1999; Montiel, 2003).

A sign of its significance is that the forests occupy more than 2 million hectares, which represents 70% of the area of Galicia. In addition, most of them are covered by tree masses, close to 1.5 million hectares, which gives forest development a greater chance of development. Just over 100,000 hectares are occupied by dense tree areas and more than 600,000 hectares predominate shrub species, scrub and herbaceous (IV IFN, 2011).

The tourist attraction that generates a mount, in some cases is directed towards a specific element of consumption and other times it is oriented to the whole of the mount. So the planning and management of the mountain from the tourist point of view is fundamental and will condition its development as a place in which to develop the tourist activity. Visitors are attracted to nodes, itineraries, scenarios, invisible elements, spaces or net-

works of forest spaces (Regueiro, 1994; Donaire and Gordi, 2003; Lage, 2003; Montiel, 2003; Ortega, 2004; Rodríguez, 2004).

A) Nodes can be defined as the raw material of tourism. In fact many tourists identify a space from these nodes that are perceived as that which must be seen. The significance that nodes can have within the development of a territory from the tourist point of view is very present in other types of tourism such as the urban one: the Statue of Liberty, the Eiffel Tower, etc. In the mountains have also been created a series of nodes such as monumental trees, around which are concentrated a large number of tourists such as the ancient *Quercus robur* that contains a chapel inside, in the French town of Yvetot, the ancient dragon of Icod de los Vinos which is a symbol of identity of the island of Tenerife, etc.

B) The itineraries constitute another element of tourist consumption of the mountains. Well-managed and orderly itineraries, besides being an element of consumption, become a basic tool for the dynamization of the forests, as they allow a correct distribution of tourists in a coherent and homogeneous way towards the spaces with the least environmental impact.

C) The scenarios are another element that is already consumed in areas of southern Europe, where in addition to making an itinerary in the mountains develop more common activities (resting, eating, sunbathing, etc.) with what needs to exist a series of endowments in certain areas of the mountains. But each and every one of this series of infrastructures were made under some criteria of quality and adaptation to the natural characteristics of the environment. At present, in Galicia there is a need to dynamize and improve certain recreational areas that already exist. Within the scenarios, the whole of the mountain is another element of consumption. The tourists who demand these elements are often attracted by certain values that they assign to the mountains like their romantic beauty, the healthy practice of walking, the authenticity and the wild life, the peculiarity and unique characteristics of the forest areas, etc. All this typology of values must be taken into account when planning the forests for tourist use.

D) The “invisible elements” of the territory define another form of consumption (Donaire and Gordi, 2003). One example is the Yosemite National Park in the USA, where one of its main attractions is the possibility of seeing bears. Another example we can find in the mountains related to myths or legends such as the Sherwood Forest that uses the image of Robin Hood as a fundamental element of tourism consumption. In Galicia a clear example

is the “Fraga de Cecebre” in the municipality of Cambre, which was the inspiration of the book “El bosque animado” by Wecescalo Fernández published in 1943 and in 2001 was taken to the cinema as a film, in which is described as an exceptional forest space where trees have a soul that can be perceived by all the people who visit it.

E) The succession of forest areas throughout the territory can be constituted as another element of tourist consumption. Even form as a network of forest areas with their own peculiarities. In addition, it would also be possible to relate these forest areas to the NPS (Protected Natural Areas) where the forest area is significant. So within Galicia could be offered a series of networks of forest areas protected under some figure of environmental protection.

The creation of these networks is an innovative element, since few countries can find examples of tourism consumption based on the relationship between natural spaces that generate complex and diverse tourism products such as South Africa, the United States and Australia, while in most of Europe the natural spaces are managed as an end in itself, which is limiting the multifunctionality of the mountains that are in them.

All this shows that tourist consumption in the mountains is not based on a single objective, but there are various consumption purposes that condition multiple forms of tourism behaviour. One of the main challenges of mountain tourism management is the ability to respond to different interests and demands that must be compatible with each other and, in turn, with the environmental, socio-cultural and economic conditions of the mountains.

We must bear in mind that besides offering a series of tourist consumption elements within the mountains and the same as a whole, we must take advantage of all the potential of these spaces, also as complementary elements to other tourist activities. Consider the current situation of rural tourism in Galicia and other types of accommodation such as campsites that have the greatest weakness in the lack of complementary activities (Miramontes, 2015). At the same time, try to relate the development of forest tourism in the hand of tourism offers that are already fully consolidated and developed, such as the different routes of the Camino de Santiago.

3. THE ROAD OF SANTIAGO AND FOREST TOURISM

In this section the different routes of the Santiago Way are related to each of the tourist elements of the

Galician mountains, which are considered basic for the development of this activity: forest area per inhabitant at municipal level, location of monumental trees, ENP (Protected Natural Areas), rural tourism accommodation, number of campsites, recreational areas-viewpoints and environmental education centres.

At the same time that a considerable number of variables and elements of tourist consumption of the Galician mountains are related, the work titled "Monumental Trees in the Cultural Heritage of Galicia" is consulted where the authors make the different routes of the Road of Santiago in reverse from Santiago de Compostela until leaving Galicia and indicate the main monumental trees that are found (Rodríguez and Izco, 2003). So this work continues with this methodology of work, but adding a greater number of variables.

Although the significance of the number of pilgrims on each of the routes is very different, all the variables of forest tourism that can be taken advantage of by the Jacobean route as complementary activities are considered.

4. CONCLUSIONS

It is more than proven that Galicia and, in particular Santiago de Compostela, is a destination of consolidated pilgrimage that every year after years is "consumed" by a greater number of people coming from all over the world. However, it is also true that it is necessary to raise and create new strategies to boost this tourism product, because although the number of pilgrims increases, this increase could still be greater as we begin to detect that the "holy year" effect stagnation can occur. In addition, one of the objectives that has been proposed since 1993 by the Public Administrations and the different entities in charge of streamlining the Camino de Santiago was to provide help in order to solve the socioeconomic imbalance between the coast and the interior of Galicia. The Camino de Santiago has been always considered as a potential tool for the development of the areas through the different routes run. So, from this work, Forest tourism is proposed to take into account as one option among others to achieve this goal.

In addition, it is also clear that tourism over the decades has become an expanding activity that is demanded by a larger number of people. In the same line, the mountains and the trees constitute an element and an optimal space so that the population can satisfy their needs and desires of nature, clearly compatible with the realization of a pilgrimage.

Anyway, it is necessary to be clear that it is essential to carry out an exhaustive work of planning of the recreational and tourist function on the territory and more, when it is speaking of dynamization of the forest tourism, since the levels of frequentation of the mountains can become In one of its major problems, motivated by the possibility of degrading the natural potentialities and enjoyment of these territories.

Therefore, the creation of a network of forest areas with a series of infrastructures coherent according to the characteristics of the territory should be a very important option to take into account for the development of tourism in Galicia, both as a tourist product in itself, and as a complementary for other products such as the Camino de Santiago. Also within this network could be made a small differentiation according to the characteristics of the mountains, which would allow a territorial redistribution of tourism in the forest areas and a possible reduction of impacts.

In a group would be the hills included in human settlements (urban and / or rural) or tourist elements such as monumental trees. Another group would include the mountains that are close to the cities or towns, which could be called as periurban mountains, characterized by attractive landscape but with a rather small fragility index. A third group would be formed by the mounts that, due to their size, cover several municipalities, which would be referred to as mounts on a regional scale. The latter, perhaps, would have a value as an element of local development, a more direct link between tourism and the improvement of the socio-economic structure of these territories.

Galician society knows that its territory has magnificent conditions for tourism to develop and reach greater importance within the socio-economic structure, but today, despite this great potential is known, there are a number of shortcomings that prevent the expected consolidation.

One of the biggest problems is seasonality, since tourists visiting Galicia are concentrated in the summer months, which negatively affects the whole sector, since it impedes the improvement of the quality and profitability margins with which limit their possibilities of growth and updating to the market. Therefore the use of natural and cultural resources is necessary for the diversification of tourism product. In fact, we believe that support for the development of forest tourism can be quite important for the future of the Camino de Santiago, the consumption of the sector and the economy in general.

In addition, with the promotion of forestry tourism, it would help to achieve the seasonal adjustment and devel-

opment of the Galician regions of greater rural character, which are suffering from a sharp decline in population and economic stagnation. Forestry tourism is characterized as being respectful of the natural environment, heritage and local societies, but it is also necessary to worry about avoiding a saturation of these territories, which could have the opposite effect. Also given the characteristics of forest tourism should also take advantage of its perfect ability to engage other tourism activities such as traditional sun and beach or rural tourism, which in addition to taking advantage of the forest areas would help to enhance other

types of tourism. Remember that one of the greatest weaknesses of rural tourism is the lack of an attractive offer of complementary activities, since this modality focuses too much on the provision of accommodation.

In short, the promotion of forestry tourism would not only reduce the seasonality of tourism in Galicia and create a new element of attraction for a typology of scarce tourists in the Galician market, but also contribute to the dynamization of a considerable number of rural areas and collaboration with the tourist product star of Galicia: the Camino de Santiago.