

Meeting Challenges
for Rural Tourism
through Co-Creation
of Sustainable
Tourist Experiences

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Edited by

Elisabeth Kastenholtz,
Maria João Carneiro,
Celeste Eusébio
and Elisabete Figueiredo

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INTRODUCTORY CHAPTER

ELISABETH KASTENHOLZ,
MARIA JOÃO CARNEIRO, CELESTE EUSÉBIO
AND ELISABETE FIGUEIREDO

Rural tourism is not very new in many parts of the world, but it has recently received increasing attention from researchers, politicians and managers alike. This is mostly due to new market trends, the growing recognition of the “rural crisis” and of the urge to solve it, as well as the belief in the potential of tourism as a development tool for rural areas (Cánoves, Villarino, Priestley, & Blanco, 2004; OECD, 1994; Sharpley, 2002; Wang & Pfister, 2008). As a matter of fact, research concerning “rural tourism” has increased substantially over the past 30 years. A search regarding articles published on the topic, indexed in the Scopus platform (www.scopus.com) (widely used for bibliometric analysis in tourism; see Hall, 2011) shows that in the year 2000 there were about 50 papers published or in press, while numbers have increased since then, reaching 264 in the year of 2014 (Lane & Kastenzholz, 2015). This strong interest is related to the many economic opportunities that have been identified, but also to the need to develop new products, new formats for experience, more professional market approaches and cooperative destination-management efforts. These must be based on appealing and distinctive destination resources, in an attempt to adapt to new and changing market needs, in an ever increasing competitive global business context. Investment needs to be carefully planned and successfully managed, and local actors empowered and integrated, so as to enhance sustainable rural destination development (Kastenzholz, Carneiro, Marques & Lima, 2012; Lane & Kastenzholz, 2015).

However, there is also evidence that rural tourism is not a miraculous antidote for the previously mentioned crisis, particularly not in all places and under all circumstances (Ribeiro & Marques, 2002; Sharpley, 2002). Despite some suggestions for critical factors of success for rural tourism in the literature (e.g. Gannon, 1994; Sharpley, 2002; Wilson, Fesenmaier, Fesenmaier & Van Es, 2001), there is still a need for a more thorough

understanding of the rural tourism phenomenon and the nature of the tourism experience, lived and conditioned by so many actors and factors, and also of ways to optimise it to the benefit of all, while making the best use of endogenous resources and competences, landscapes, attractions and people, yielding sustainable destination development (Gannon, 1994; Kastenholz, Carneiro, Marques & Lima, 2012; Lane & Kastenholz, 2015; Saxena, Clark, Oliver & Ilbery, 2007).

This book contributes to this ongoing debate, focusing on the tourist experience, here conceptualised as “co-created” between hosts and guests, based on destination-specific elements of the “countryside capital” (Garrod, Wornell, & Youel, 2006) and aiming at sustainability (Kastenholz, Carneiro & Marques, 2012). It contains both conceptual and empirical chapters, with diverse and new perspectives, methodological approaches and cases from several countries, developed in three parts:

Part I. The Visitor’s view

This part focuses on the visitors’ perspective, considering sensorial, spatial, emotional and spiritual experience dimensions, their link to local resources and communities, but also conditioning factors, outcomes and meanings of these experiences and managerial implications, within the new paradigm of experience marketing.

Part II. Local actors and communities, local resources and conditions

This part highlights experience co-creation with local actors and communities, based on local resources and conditions. Relevant issues are the perspectives and involvement of local actors and communities, the debate on lifestyle entrepreneurs, leadership, social capital and networks, mobilization of endogenous resources, as well as the socio-economic context. The perceptions, attitudes and willingness of local residents to support tourism are also addressed within this part, as they are of fundamental relevance to exploring the relationship between hosts and guests in rural tourism destinations.

Part III. Rural tourism and sustainable destination development

The final part discusses how far rural tourism experiences may contribute to sustainable development of rural destinations, a debate stressing the complex nature and relevance of integrated and locally controlled tourism development and strategies to make the best use of the endogenous potential for the best of all stakeholders and resources involved, while simultaneously aiming at preservation of scarce and valuable resources.

All these parts start with an initial conceptual chapter, reflecting on the nature of the particular rural tourism dimension on which the subsequent chapters focus, and which have been written by several selected authors who presented their studies at the 2013 International Rural Tourism Conference “Re-inventing rural tourism and the rural tourism experience—Conserving, innovating and co-creating for sustainability” (Kastenholz, Eusébio, Cunha, et al., 2013). Authors were invited to develop their papers as chapters of the present book, based on several rounds of reviewing, considering a) the conference reviewers’ comments¹ and b) the comments and suggestions made by the coordinators of this book.

In the following sections, the contributions in each part will be briefly presented and connected to the overall theme of this book—the challenges which rural tourism destinations and operators need to deal with in a complex, frequently fragile and structurally disadvantaged local context, within a global, highly dynamic and competitive business environment.

We start our argument with reflections and empirical evidence regarding the tourists’ or visitors’ point of view on the rural tourist experience since, without people who are interested in visiting the countryside, there would be no rural tourism. Of course, without a countryside affording a certain number and quality of resources, services, people and conditions, there would be no rural tourism either, but our argument will start with the tourist as the core of the tourism activity from a business and marketing point of view. We will then consider the perspective of the local communities and resources as equally important, however diverse the ways they adapt to market needs and opportunities, while generally aiming at maintaining their identities and distinctiveness. Finally, we will integrate the two sides of the medal (demand and supply) in a critical reflection on sustainability potentials, but also on threats, challenges and possible future avenues of research and action, yielding the achievement or approximation towards the ideal of sustainability.

Elisabeth Kastenholz and Maria João Carneiro introduce the tourist perspective in their conceptual chapter about the tourist experience as lived and co-created by the tourist. The authors present, in a systematic manner, the conditioning factors, nature, dimensional structure and content of this rural tourist experience, as identified through an extensive literature review in experience marketing, tourism and rural tourism. They conclude that the rural tourist experience is “a complex whole, lived and co-created in a particular territorial, natural, social and cultural context, from which it draws main experience and symbolic elements.” Unique, “authentic” local resources, associated with a “frequently nostalgically idealised rural way of life,... sought as a way to escape stressful urban living contexts” are

identified as relevant ingredients, as is the much-appreciated nature, “largely contribut[ing] to a relaxing, but also stimulating and sensory-rich experience”. A wide range of (recreational, sports, cultural) activities are important for an apparently increasing number of tourists seeking more active holidays, while also social experiences, e.g. contact with the community, are frequently sought, appreciated and positively remembered. The authors conclude that the understanding of the rural tourist experience should enhance the strategic marketing potential of rural tourism destinations and help “develop a variety of appealing, co-creative, involving, distinctive and memorable rural tourism experience opportunities”.

Dora Agapito, Ana Cláudia Campos and Hugo Almeida discuss the relevance of the sensorial dimension of the tourist experience in a rural destination, which are, according to the authors “characterised by a rich and specific collection of endogenous resources, ideal for conceptualising unique sensory-informed tourist experiences involving and benefiting all destination stakeholders”. The authors point out major trends of tourist demand evolving towards “skilled consumption... to satisfy higher order needs and aspirations driven by creativity”. This chapter discusses the role of perception and co-creation in managing and marketing rural tourism experiences by focusing on its sensory dimension. It also presents methodological approaches for analysing the sensory tourist experience and finally illustrates, with three cases, how to use sensory elements in managing and marketing rural tourism experiences to enhance the overall experience quality lived at the destination. The suggestion is to bring together local stakeholders, communities and multi-sensory destination resources (e.g., fauna, flora, landscapes, handicraft, and gastronomy) that may combine to form frameworks of unique, themed experience proposals immersing visitors in the local atmosphere, potentially leading to a sustainable competitive advantage.

Spatio-temporal tourist behaviour is also an experience dimension worthy of notice. Hee Jeong Yun and Mi Hyeon Park analysed this in their chapter on walking tourists at a rural festival in the Republic of Korea (the Sancheoneo Ice Festival), using time geography theory and a smartphone application based on GPS data. The authors highlight the role that festivals in rural areas may play in promoting these localities’ economic development and cultural heritage preservation, and they show the usefulness of the spatio-temporal information provided by smartphone-embedded GPS for planning successful rural festivals. Given that most rural festivals are small events, concentrated in limited spaces, but sometimes attracting significant numbers of visitors, it is important for planners and policy makers to understand tourists’ spatio-temporal

movement behaviours and experiences. The results obtained in this study show an intense temporal and spatial concentration of walking tourists. This concentration is revealed to influence, negatively, the interaction of tourists with the local community and the economic effects generated by the event. The results of this study thus give significant contributions to festival planners and policy makers, and their consideration should contribute to more sustainable tourism development in rural areas.

Next, focusing on experience co-creation based on endogenous heritage resources, Mariana Carvalho, Joana Lima, Elisabeth Kastenholz and Ana João Sousa analyse the natural and cultural experience in Janeiro de Cima, a village in Central Portugal. They specifically look at the perceptions regarding this experience co-creation, from the perspective of all stakeholders involved (tourists, population, agents of tourism supply and institutions) and thereby identify the potential of co-creative experiences. A brief theoretical reflection on the role of natural and cultural resources in the tourism experience supports a case study approach, involving documentary analysis, field observation and interviews with all stakeholders. The study concludes that tourism could be improved in the village since there is the potential to set cultural and natural resources into value through the co-creation of corresponding tourism experiences. This process can lead to product innovation in the existing tourism supply system. Creativity in themed participative experience settings, involving “knowledgeable residents”, is seen as a promising concept in reshaping traditional culture through reinventing the past and reinforcing the attractiveness and distinctiveness of tourism resources.

Ana Maria Campón-Cerro, José Manuel Hernández-Mogollón, Helena Alves and Elide Di-Clemente provide insights on the experience of tourists in rural destinations through an empirical study carried out in Spain. An online questionnaire was used to assess previous rural tourism practice, motivations, cognitive and affective images of rural destinations, perceived quality, perceived value and trust, place attachment, satisfaction (with destination attributes, regarding relations with residents, relations with tourism providers and overall satisfaction) and loyalty. The study provides important conclusions concerning the features to which tourism managers should pay particular attention in order to increase tourist satisfaction and loyalty and presents suggestions on strategies to improve the rural tourism experience. Apart from revealing that the tourists interviewed held a very positive cognitive and affective image of the rural destinations visited, associating high quality and value to the visited territories, visitors also show considerable attachment to the destinations.

The authors observed particular tourist satisfaction regarding the relationships with residents and the chance to undergo different experiences.

Finally, Richard Sharpley and Sarah Jeppson reflect on the emotional and even spiritual dimensions of the rural tourist experience, based on a qualitative study undertaken in the English Lake District, in which visitors were interviewed regarding these emotional and spiritual qualities of their experience. As relevant themes both tangible and intangible elements of the countryside were revealed as marking the experience, in a frequently emotion-loaded discourse on the contrast between the rural idyll and the modern, urban living context. This countryside experience is shaped by the area's specific physical features, by impressive weather/light conditions, the striking experience of silence and immersion in nature, with which visitors tend to engage in particularly deeply through some form of physical and sometimes challenging activity, while for some just "being in and gazing upon the landscape and nature... was sufficient to elicit an emotional response". Confirming an emotion-rich experience discourse, the authors conclude that "all respondents recognised that there exists a deeper, more meaningful dimension to their touristic experience of the Lake District", which for some respondents may be termed "spiritual", depending on their openness to religious or spiritual beliefs.

There is a need to understand this potentially highly emotional, involving, and even spiritual nature of the increasingly actively co-created and rural heritage-based tourist experience which is focused on in these chapters of Part I. Thus these probably desired, valued and memorable experience dimensions can be addressed when trying to optimise the rural tourist experience. The role, relevance and need for integration of the diverse dimensions of this experience need to be understood so as to enhance the potential of a rural tourist destination providing appealing, "authentic", involving and memorable tourist experiences. These experiences include the sensorial appreciation of so many rural destination facets, social interaction on-site, movement patterns, as well as the local resource-based active co-creation of the experience, with "authenticity" of both the resource base and the experience co-creation setting. Thereby, place attachment and visitor loyalty should increase, which may improve a destination's attractiveness in the long run, namely through repeat visitation and positive word of mouth (Silva, Kastenholz & Abrantes, 2013).

Moving from the tourist's perspective to that of local actors, communities, resources and conditions, means emphasizing the destination as the core of the rural tourism experience opportunities—the rural territory and its human and physical essence. The next part focuses on

those who could be considered the “key stakeholders of rural areas”. This focus means addressing those living in them, working there, shaping their landscapes and social and cultural structures and focusing on all the tangible and intangible features within the rural environment making it different, special, and unique and both a challenge to live and work in and desirable for tourism consumption.

In this context, Elisabete Figueiredo, Celeste Eusébio and Zélia Breda first draw the readers’ attention to the important role of rural resources and local actors in the co-creation of tourism experiences. Rural areas are recognised as territories with a wide array of cultural and natural resources that may serve as a basis for developing a large set of tourism activities and initiatives. The authors refer to these resources and highlight their relevance, but remark on the crucial role of local stakeholders—communities and supply agents (private and public)—in co-creating appealing tourism experiences. The relevance of the attitudes of these stakeholders towards tourism and of all their actions in the scope of tourism, including their interaction with visitors, to develop rewarding shared rural tourism experiences, is discussed. The creation of networks of supply agents is also pointed out as an important strategy in this context, namely for developing more attractive, varied, better integrated, articulated and coordinated tourism experiences, and to create a greater synergy between supply agents.

In the background of the frequently invoked challenge of scarce qualified human resources limiting tourism development in rural areas, Carlos Costa, Susana Caçador and Zélia Breda present interesting data on the employment situation of tourism graduates living in rural municipalities, in comparison with those living in urban areas. They analyse employment rates, professional experience, fields of activity, working hours and schedules, contractual situations, entrepreneurial activity, leadership positions and salaries, and additionally consider gender differences. The results reveal that those living in urban contexts invest more in continuous learning, which should be related to correspondingly better career opportunities, as both leadership positions and higher salaries tend to be associated with urban municipalities, which may be due to diverse tourism industry structure in both contexts. Gender disparities exist in both contexts, but seem to be more accentuated in terms of career development and, thus, more difficult for women in rural municipalities to fight. On the other hand, women in rural municipalities seem to be exposed to working conditions which are more compatible with their personal and family lives. The authors advise that qualified human resources are crucial for successful development of rural tourism, calling

for ongoing and deeper research on this topic, as well as regarding the conditions for badly needed entrepreneurial activity in these areas.

Nancy McGehee, Whitney Knollenberg and Amy Komorowski draw our attention to the role of social capital and leadership in successful and sustainable rural tourism development. After exploring the current literature in leadership, both in general and specific to rural tourism, the authors analyse three cases of community-level rural tourism leaders: in North Carolina, USA, Virginia, USA, and Haiti. Based on the social capital framework, the sources of success of these leaders and their communities are analysed in their effort to use tourism as an economic development tool, also considering the role of social capital as an important factor for leadership development. The authors explore the questions of whether “successful rural communities [are] led by individuals that embody elements of bridging and bonding social capital”, and particularly if “one person [can] embody a blend of bridging and bonding social capital regardless of the type of leadership traits and approaches they employ”. In light of the cases studied, the authors respond positively, concluding that “it is particularly interesting that multiple leadership approaches were present, yet each individual still embodied bridging and bonding social capital”. The findings may lay a foundation and serve as a framework for future research on the potential of leadership in rural tourism development. The vital role of both bridging and bonding social capital in rural tourism leadership development is stressed, while additional research issues and approaches are outlined and recommended.

Jerzy Banski and Maria Bednarek-Szczepańska draw our attention to the importance of landscape for the development of specific types of agro-tourism accommodation facilities. Results of a survey of owners of 60 agro-tourist farms in Poland, located in four physio-geographical area categories and corresponding landscape types (mountainous, lowland, upland, and lake region), showed a connection between the type of equipment and services provided and the respective landscape integration and location of the accommodation facilities. For example, agro-tourism facilities in lakelands were most likely to provide watercraft activities, those in lowlands and in mountains had a greater tendency to organise entertainment events and activities for groups and there was more opportunity to participate in farm work in agro-tourism facilities located in lowlands and highlands. The study also reveals differences among accommodation facilities located in areas with diverse landscape specificities, concerning promotional strategies and demand. In this context, the Internet was relatively more likely to be used to promote agro-tourism facilities in mountains and lakelands, compared to other

geographical areas. The findings thus suggest that geographical specificities may influence product development and promotional approaches of agro-tourism accommodation facilities and, consequently, may originate differences in demand.

Conceição Cunha, Elisabeth Kastenholz and Maria João Carneiro reflect on lifestyle entrepreneurship in rural areas and the question of whether these may or not follow business ambitions and economically succeed together with pursuing lifestyle goals. After a literature review on entrepreneurship in tourism, lifestyle entrepreneurship in tourism and entrepreneurship in rural tourism, this chapter explores the entrepreneurial nature of some small-scale rural tourism businesses, located in three villages of North and Central Portugal, whose owners' lifestyle motives impact on their management. The analysis identifies, along with lifestyle motivations (a desire to live in the countryside, family togetherness, maintenance of nostalgically valued family heritage), business-focused attitudes of entrepreneurs (such as opportunity recognition, investment decisions or the willingness to take risks). Additionally, "the entrepreneurs show attachment to the village and an understanding of the potential and desirable connections between local resources and stakeholders to create an overall more appealing tourist destination, while contributing to the village's and community's development". Through their initiatives, investment in the villages, willingness to make a living there with their families (despite more appealing opportunities elsewhere), and through the attraction of tourists, these entrepreneurs stimulate heritage preservation, the local economy and a lively and thus more attractive social life in the villages. The authors conclude that "all this corroborates the perspective of small rural lifestyle-oriented tourism enterprises potentially contributing to sustainable destination development".

Lúcia Jesus in her chapter highlights the perceptions and attitudes regarding rural tourism and its impacts which residents of the Douro and Dão-Lafões regions in Portugal express. After discussing the factors underlying attitudes, perceptions and support of residents regarding tourism impacts on local communities, she relates these dimensions, stressing that support for rural tourism seems to be highly influenced by the perceived negative and positive impacts deriving from that activity, confirming results of several other studies in this field. The author also discusses the perceptions of the benefits and impacts as unbalanced and uneven. In fact, as the author argues, although residents do not develop negative perceptions regarding environmental and socio-cultural impacts of rural tourism, they seem to be extremely aware of the fact that tourism and related activities appear to benefit only a small number of residents,

mainly the ones directly related to those activities. The author's conclusions show the existence of a strong statistical relationship between the personal benefits perceived and positive and negative attitudes, as well as minor or major support regarding tourism activities in their areas of residence. The results draw our attention to the need to take into consideration residents' perceptions and attitudes towards tourism if one intends to plan and to manage rural tourism destinations in a more suitable manner.

Luis Silveira, Paulo Espínola and Norberto Santos also deal with residents of local communities and their perceptions regarding experiences with tourists in the islands of Graciosa and São Jorge, in the Azores, Portugal. Tourism in the Azores region has only recently been the object of strategic planning and Graciosa and São Jorge receive fewer tourists every year than other Azorean islands, as they are considered a secondary tourism pole in the context of the whole archipelago, yet the local population seems to value tourism activities. Results from a survey conducted on the two islands show that residents have a more positive attitude regarding the future economic development that may derive from tourism. Given the small number of tourists in the Graciosa and São Jorge islands, up to now, residents stress the scarcity of contacts and experiences, although they are given an extremely positive value. Results demonstrate that residents consider tourists as friendly and communicative, visiting the islands mainly to be in contact with nature and to appreciate the landscape. Also, the proximity to larger and better-equipped islands (in touristic terms) is perceived as a factor of attraction. Despite generally positive attitudes regarding tourism, respondents are aware of the needs in terms of tourism development, particularly related to activities and services offered. Local populations seem to be willing to invest in tourism, if there is an opportunity, again revealing their support and faith in the future of tourism and related activities on both islands. As in the previous chapter, results of the present study also demonstrate the need to accommodate residents' perceptions and attitudes regarding tourism in respective development strategies and policies.

Thérèse Conway and Mary Cawley demonstrate the opportunity for development of ecotourism products based on a combination of endogenous and exogenous resources and the problems associated with the certification of these products. They provide an analysis of three case studies—a bed and breakfast accommodation facility, a country house and a hostel—located in a specific ecotourism destination of Ireland known as the Greenbox, which received the EU Flower certification label (a certification for businesses that achieve certain environmental standards).

Data obtained by semi-structured interviews with the owners or managers of these businesses illustrates how endogenous and exogenous resources were combined to develop ecotourism products. Results highlight the relevance of integrating exogenous resources (such as expert knowledge and external funding) to support and complement the existing endogenous resources base. These cases also permit an analysis of the eco-certification process and its pros and cons. Findings show that the relevance attributed to the certification varied among businesses, with some interviewees considering it very important to increase the attractiveness of their businesses' for tourists. However, despite the social capital gained by the owners/managers regarding principles of sustainable use of resources (education, personal experience and commitment), and the recognised importance of funding and advice obtained during the certification processes, the bureaucracy, costs and the modest contribution to the creation of employment are considered weaknesses of this process. Therefore, the authors defend a "balance between a robust method of certification and the importance of ensuring that it falls within the financial and time resources of providers".

The above-summarised chapters from Part II highlight the role of endogenous resources (natural, cultural, landscape), conditions and competences, the need to foster human capital building and improve the conditions for both entrepreneurs and qualified people to stay in these areas. Although some of these types of people may remain due to lifestyle motives, it additionally requires overall planning to improve the quality of life for local communities, in several dimensions. Tourism is identified as a potential and apparently often desired tool to enhance this type of development. It should intelligently integrate the most appealing and distinctive endogenous resources in coordinated co-creative experience proposals, while also complementing them with relevant exogenous resources to gain competitiveness and visibility. Local entrepreneurs are understood as decisive for this kind of development, as is the local community, also co-creating tourist experiences and being (more or less) affected by the activity taking place in their territories. One of the conclusions of several chapters is the need to take all local stakeholders' interests into account when aiming at sustainable rural destination development, which is an ambitious goal, discussed in further detail in the final section of the book.

In Part III, Celeste Eusébio, Elisabeth Kastenholtz and Zélia Breda introduce the topic of sustainable tourism and tourism destination development in further detail, presenting an extensive literature review on the subject. The authors propose a sustainable development model for

rural destinations considering the specificity of rural areas as tourism destinations (e.g. a fragile economic, social and sometimes environmental context, often impacted by the agricultural crisis, small-scale family businesses, lack of alternative economic opportunities, small, traditional communities, etc.). It focuses on five dimensions of sustainability: economic, ecological/environmental, socio-cultural, technological and political. They provide a framework for the evolution of the sustainability discussion, a debate on its particular relevance for rural territories and communities and present an analysis of each dimension, all of which are suggested for consideration in all rural tourism strategies.

Focusing on the economic dimension of sustainability, Yasuo Ohe and Shinichi Kurihara provide relevant insights on the connections between two important economic activities—agriculture and tourism—for economic development of rural areas. Based on data collected via a survey of agricultural cooperatives in Japan, the authors investigate the relationship between the direct economic effects generated by local brand farm products (e.g. increases in revenue and employment) and the indirect economic effects caused by the development of tourism activity. The results of the empirical model presented in this study reveal not only the importance of traditional production aspects, such as quality control of brand products, but also a perspective on local resource management. Specifically, they suggest valorising local food heritage and the creation of partnerships between the tourism and culinary sectors. Moreover, the results of the study show that a wider and more longstanding perspective of local resource management is necessary to enhance the complementary relationship between economic gains from both local brand farm products and tourism development.

Gabriel Weber and Ignasi Puig-Ventosa address the issue of climate change and adaptation in rural areas by presenting an integrated case study of winter tourism and mountain agriculture in the Catalan Pyrenees. Based on a literature review and the case study, they identify environmental, socio-cultural and economic benefits of climate change as well as the costs of this change, and the potential conflicts between rural winter tourism and mountain agriculture. Moreover, they reveal the approaches adopted for dealing with climate change in the Catalan Pyrenees. Finally, they emphasise the strategies that may be implemented in order to overcome tensions between tourism and other activities developed in rural areas and to minimise the potential negative impacts of tourism, especially those deriving from climate change adaptation. Some of these strategies are the diversification of tourism activities, adoption of environmentally friendly

policies and promoting the cooperation between farmers and tourism agents by involving farmers in tourism planning.

Maria Isabel Sanchez-Hernandez, Dolores Gallardo-Vázquez and Mercedes Galán-Ladero discuss the relevance of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) for the success of tourism organizations in rural areas. This study provides relevant information about the role of responsible actions of companies and about the certification of these actions to achieve sustainable development in rural tourism destinations. Through a qualitative study based on tourism managers' attitudes and perceptions about CSR carried out in Extremadura, Spain, the authors analyse how a process of certification, verification and registration of Responsible Tourism Businesses may contribute to creating social value and regional development. The results of the empirical study show that, according to tourism managers' perspective, CSR actions could have considerable positive impacts on tourism business and regional development in Extremadura. Results also reveal that rural managers are highly motivated towards CSR, as they expect benefits from the new CSR law in the region. The authors also provide some recommendations for promoting CSR. They conclude that tourism managers should be aware of the benefits that may derive from the certification of socially responsible tourism businesses, need to be more proactive and would benefit from creating a network under the umbrella of a "Responsible Tourism brand", which should help promote the region abroad and gain competitive advantages.

Ana Gomes, Idalina Sardinha and David Ross reflect on the importance and difficulties associated with cooperation among different community actors for successful resource value creation and sustainable destination development, largely based on bonding and bridging social capital. An empirical study conducted in the Alentejo region, where important archaeological findings have been made, reveals a difficulty in ways to "strategically connect diverse resources and a clear hierarchical communication gap between municipal authorities, resource controllers and small businesses", visible in "top-down communication, isolated and uncoordinated actions and territorial fragmentation". The authors present a "human and technologically assisted model specially conceived for cultural and economic value creation in high mistrust and low communication rural contexts". They conclude that "intervention of an external coordination and mentoring agent to facilitate the value co-creation process associated with a technological device to foster information exchange and management, as well as communication" would be needed to overcome several of the barriers identified. They also suggest

the application and validation of the model to this and other rural areas and resource contexts.

Finally, Bernard Lane looks at the problems of co-creating rural tourism that can fulfil the triple bottom-line requirements of sustainable tourism, not to forget a major issue that has been neglected in the rural tourism debate—the way tourists move to and within these areas, i.e. related to fuel/energy consumption. Presenting the case of rail-based rural tourism, with a series of rural railway regeneration projects (both conventional community and heritage railway projects), he highlights how these projects integrate and enhance the affected region's sustainability in terms of social, cultural, environmental and economic dimensions. The reflections presented here draw on many years of experience working in rural tourism, as researcher and consultant, and with rural transport providers in the UK, Poland and elsewhere and concludes with a 10-point list of lessons to be learned for sustainable tourism from the experience of implementing rail-based rural tourism.

We may conclude that all these approaches highlighted in the chapters included in Part III, with the aim of contributing to sustainable development of rural territories and communities through a diversity of rural tourism initiatives, need to be carefully adapted to each area's specificities, resource-base, economic structure, local communities, entrepreneurs and institutions. They must simultaneously be aware of the tourist market's profile, desires and evolution as well as the wider competitive destination context, thus requiring an integrated view of all issues discussed in all parts of this book.

Even if numerous unique resources, landscapes, attractions, traditions, stories and environments may be identified in rural areas that would apparently make a perfect fit with the new market trends of experience-focused co-creative tourism, local communities and actors cannot be neglected in planning and implementing these tourism-based rural development strategies (Figueiredo, Kastenzholz & Pinho, 2014; Kastenzholz, Eusébio, Carneiro & Figueiredo 2013; Saxena et al, 2007). They should not only be recognised as central players in this strategy, responsible for keeping these areas alive and decisively conditioning the tourist experience, they are also primary stakeholders of the territories which they live in and have shaped for generations, as well as being those most affected by tourism impacts. However, these communities are, according to the studies presented here (of rural tourism in its developing phase), mainly favourable towards this activity, due to expectations regarding sustainable development opportunities.

Whether local players realise these opportunities largely depends on their capacity to develop appealing rural tourist experience products that match the desires of those visitors that may most value the particularities of each territory (Kastenholz, Carneiro, Marques & Lima, 2012; Kastenholz, 2004). Therefore, they need continuous market research and a thorough understanding of the nature of the experience desired by diverse market groups. It also requires the ability to coordinate the many features and facets of the destination and the tourism activity to articulate the latter with other local activities, and to develop social capital and communication capacity that may help build effective networks both within and reaching out of the community and territory. Aspects such as social responsibility, sustainability, governance and leadership are at stake here, but many other issues will continue to deserve attention in a search for new and better rural tourism experiences, experiences that take all stakeholders' interests into account, while not only preserving but also setting into value local/regional heritage and resources and that, last but not least, may contribute to a countryside where people not only like to travel to but also enjoy living in.

Last but not least, we want to thank all reviewers (including the Scientific Board of the 2013 International Conference) and all authors for their interest in participating in this project, contributing to the overall quality of a book which we hope will be useful to all those interested in rural tourism, both from an academic and a professional stance.

Notes

1. We acknowledge the effort of the invited reviewers included in the International Scientific Board of the conference (see Kastenholz, Eusébio, Cunha et al., 2013).

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PART I.

THE VISITOR'S VIEW

CHAPTER ONE

RURAL TOURIST EXPERIENCES

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Introduction

What makes rural tourism attractive to tourists and should, therefore, be recognised as its primary market driver is the experience lived and co-created by visitors and local actors in rural areas, taking advantage of most appealing and distinctive endogenous resources (Kastenholz, Carneiro & Marques, 2012), local competences, identities and passions. This is not only true for rural tourism. Nowadays, many academics and practitioners recognise the tourist experience as the main competitive advantage a destination may provide (Mossberg, 2007; Stamboulis & Skayannis, 2003). Even in the general marketing context, a paradigm shift was suggested from products, over services to experiences (Pine & Gilmore, 1998; Schmitt, 1999). The marketing focus has shifted from a narrow view concentrated on the tangible features of goods, to broader perspectives encompassing more intangible product and consumption dimensions, such as the services provided and, particularly, the consumer experience as a whole (Schmitt, 1999; Sumathisri, Veerakumar & Prabhakaran, 2012). The design and management of this experience have thus become crucial (Kastenholz, Carneiro, Marques & Lima, 2012; Mossberg, 2007; Sumathisri et al., 2012), requiring a sound understanding of its nature in the first place. In this context, despite the very recently increasing interest in the rural tourism experience (e.g. Agapito, Valle & Mendes, 2014; Carmichael, 2005; Carneiro, Lima & Silva, 2015; Dong, Wang, Morais & Brooks, 2013; Kastenholz, Carneiro, Eusébio & Figueiredo, 2013; Lee & Chang, 2012; Park & Yoon, 2009; Popp & McCole, 2014; Quadri-Felitti & Fiore, 2012), there is still little research analysing the features, dimensions and determinants of visitors' rural tourism experience.

Moreover, several of these studies are restricted to a particular area of rural tourism—such as wine tourism (e.g. Carmichael, 2005; Popp & McCole, 2014; Quadri-Felitti & Fiore, 2012).

The present chapter aims at identifying, in a holistic and systematic manner, the most relevant factors that determine the co-creation of this experience as well as the several dimensions of visitors' tourist experience at rural destinations. It additionally recognises the multiplicity of tourist experiences that distinct visitor groups may have in diverse rural areas (Clemenson & Lane, 1997; Frochot, 2005; Kastenholz, Davis & Paul, 1999; Park & Yoon, 2009). This presentation, anchored in a literature review on the general consumption and the specific tourist experience, on the one hand, and on the *rural* tourist experience, in particular, on the other, may serve as theoretical background and guideline to more holistic and systematic empirical research regarding the rural tourist experience.

The Nature of Rural Tourist Experiences

In the general marketing context, Schmitt (1999) proposes a multidimensional perspective of experience with five dimensions: (i) affective—related to feelings triggered by consumption of products; (ii) sensory—associated with consumption perceptions through the five senses; (iii) thinking—referring to the cognitive consumption experiences of reflecting and “sensemaking”; (iv) act—corresponding to consumption activities and behaviours; (v) relate—regarding the way one relates to others and establishes one's social identity through consumption.

Pine and Gilmore (1998), probably the most cited authors in defending a paradigm shift towards the “experience economy”, suggest four “experience realms”, as a consequence of intersection of two dimensions. According to more or less active participation in an experience, and depending on either absorption or immersion in the external environment (or “experience setting”), they suggest four types of experience: (i) entertainment experiences—with passive participation, while absorbed by the environment; (ii) aesthetic experiences—still marked by passive participation but being immersed in the environment; (iii) educational experiences—one actively participates in activities being absorbed; (iv) the arguably most involving escapist experiences—characterised by active participation and immersion in the environment.

In the leisure and tourism field, several researchers (e.g. Hosany & Witham, 2010; Quadri-Felitti & Fiore, 2012) adopt the approaches suggested by Pine and Gilmore (1998), while some (e.g. Lee, Chang, Hou & Lin, 2008; Li, 2008) follow the suggestions of Schmitt (1999) and still