

Landscape and Heritage: Key Elements for Tourism Development in an Interior Space: The Case of Yecla (Murcia)

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OBJECTIVES

This research studies the current situation of inland tourism in the town of Yecla (Murcia) with special attention to its weak and strong points through the SWOT analysis, examines the local resources and highlights the opportunities, obstacles and threats to Tourism development, starting from what has already been done by the public and private sector, especially by the City Council and Regional Ministry of Tourism, and always in accordance with the Tourism Law of the Region of Murcia as a mandatory regulatory framework. The paper examines the resources that are able to respond to the tourist demand that is increasingly interested in culture, nature and lifestyles, presenting proposals for tourism development based on criteria of sustainability, participation of the whole society and greater effectiveness in the Marketing of the offer in a space of scarce tourist tradition that has always been more traditionally linked to the agrarian economy and in the last five decades to the furniture industry and related.

METHODOLOGY

The methodology used in this research is initially of qualitative type but transformed to data and therefore with quantitative traits, being fundamental the design of an interview in depth. A triangulation technique closely related to the qualitative methodology has been applied through two procedures: the triangulation of sources, which allows to compare information obtained by different procedures (questionnaires, interviews, etc.); And the methodological triangulation through the information reflected in the interviews.



The sample of informants, their long experience and extensive professional career, the variety of responsibilities performed, makes them aware of the system of organization of the tourist environment of the region. These characteristics assure us a wide and diverse information, which, coming from varied and complementary sources, enrich the vision for us intended, as well as its diversity in ages and functions performed. The matrix elaborated in the phase prior to the SWOT analysis is presented, which includes what have been considered key points to address the processes studied. The questions were structured in two blocks: a closed one, constituted by questions that had to be answered by the interviewees according to criteria of evaluation from less to more, and another one open, composed of four questions of free response.

RESULTS OF INVESTIGATION

Five questions were raised and the most significant were considered and analyzed. In the first one, the question was asked about the value that each of the six attributes considered as the best indicators of the Yecla identity would merit. Their answers placed the City of Furniture and Wine as the first and best identifier of the town. It was also sought to find out the possibilities of using the landscape values of Yecla and its surroundings as a tourist product in itself and differentiated from others, yes, provided that a prior strategy is developed to facilitate their reading and interpretation to residents already The people who come from outside for the sake of discovery. This tourism strategy responds to growing social and political concern for the conservation and enhancement of the landscape and because the analysis and interpretation of landscape dynamics over time offer opportunities of interest for tourists and people in general.

The existence of monuments, period buildings with remarkable singularity, literary references, images of engravings, painting and photography are often coincident elements on certain spaces, as happens in Yecla, that add justification to the qualifier of cultural to apply it to certain passages and the Possibilities of putting them in value through tourism. In this sense, the survey raised affirmations in which it requested the assessment on the degree of agreement / disagreement regarding the value of the landscape through tourism and initiatives such as web pages or tourist brochures; It was also asked to evaluate the opportunities for promoting the landscape to other tourist resources such as the existing monuments in the urban nucleus or outstanding natural spaces such as Mount Arabí, Sierra de Salinas or Sierra del Cuchillo.

A tourism management model has been defined that will contemplate as fundamental lines of action the recovery of the historical and artistic heritage of the city and its municipal term, in order to increase the feelings of identification of the citizens with the place where they live, To facilitate the knowledge of its past and to serve as an attraction for visitors and tourists. It is imperative to improve communications



infrastructure so that Yecla can be assured of the ease and speed of the mass tourism areas of the coast, especially the Costa de Alicante and El Altet airport. This would be linked to the termination of the motorway to Murcia/Andalusia and Valencia /Catalonia and the improvement of access to the AVE station Villena (Alicante), without forgetting the necessary development of the regional road linking both cities.

The quality and competitiveness of hotel resources and gastronomic spaces is low, for this requires an important cooperation between public-private initiative in basic aspects such as the creation of tourist packages, promotion of activities throughout the year so That is obtained a greater hotel occupancy that at the moment is very low (35,1%). There is a need to improve existing housing shortages and increase their quality to attract tourism that is increasingly demanding in its demand for services.

Good professional training of service-related workers should be ensured: catering, hospitality, tourist guides with mastery of several languages, etc., taking into account that the quality of human capital is paramount in tourism activity, in an activity based In the care and attention that some people give to others. In this sense, the obstacle that implies the absence in Yecla of a center dedicated to the training and qualification of tourism professionals should be overcome, starting from the studies regulated in modules of medium or higher degree on hospitality or restoration, as well as ensuring the promotion and Communication of the local tourist products in the Region and out of it through tour operators and advertising campaigns. It is of enormous importance the attendance and institutional presence at fairs such as FITUR, stable contacts with wholesalers and permanent presence in social networks. Only in this way will it be possible to publicize the tourism project in Yecla and guarantee the arrival of visitors and tourists.

It proposes the use of sustainability criteria in accordance with the Sustainable Tourism Charter of Vitoria in 2015 and the recommendations of the WTO regarding the declaration of 2017 as the Year of Sustainable Tourism, only in this way will the balance between environmental preservation, Economic viability and social equity in the sharing of development benefits. In a space that can potentially start in the tourist activity, it is essential to keep in mind a model that assures the sustainability of the tourism offer and the guarantee in the maintenance of the offered tourism, therefore the adequate management of the water resources and of the discharges, the Energy efficiency and environmental diagnosis should ensure a product based on the encounter with nature and the multiple possibilities that it offers in the practice of sports: hiking, mountaineering or cycling, visiting tree areas, water masses or knowledge of the agricultural and livestock tasks are possible and original opportunities for the visitor.



CONCLUSIONS

In short, the municipality of Yecla has enough potential to become a competitive indoor tourist space, attractive for its uniqueness and specificity, especially if you take into account and intelligently manage the strengths and opportunities for the start up of the activity Tourism and also the weaknesses and threats that may hinder the beginning of this development. We are at a time of great challenges in an economy of scale, changing trends and new business opportunities, with a society that sees increase its availability of free time and mobility, which forces a major effort of creativity, Vision of the future and creation of conditions from the public and private initiatives to diversify the economy and to strengthen the local development, in our case of the space North Murciano. Indoor tourism, as discussed above, is an excellent opportunity to complete and diversify economic activity, although certainly many initiatives are still needed to launch an original tourist product, appealing to a potential tourist who at the moment identifies Yecla with a An industrial city dedicated to the manufacture of furniture and related industries and also of traditional agricultural activity where the tilling of the vineyard and other crops of the Mediterranean trilogy have been a reality since time immemorial.

