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The tourism potential of border regions: endogenous resources and destination image evaluation

### Abstract

Tourism has an enormous potential while instrument of regional development. However, the opportunities are not the same for each territory and it is easy to understand that, considering the resources available, not every region has the choice to base its development strategy in the touristic industry. Taking this in consideration, the mission of classifying, evaluating and compare, from a consistent and realistic point of view, several groups of tourist resources became a necessary task and a precondition to define the touristic vocation of a region. This approach allows selecting the best alternative to tourism development.

The paper attempts to catalogue and evaluate the tourist resources of Spanish Baixo Miño and Portuguese Alto Minho, as well as to analyze the complementary elements and the external factors related with the image of the destination. We believe that the before mention methodology might be a valuable instrument to identify the strengths and weaknesses of the selected territory in what refers to its touristic development.

**Key words:** endogenous resources; regional development; tourist potential.

## **Introduction**

Tourism has an enormous potential while instrument of regional development. However, the opportunities are not the same for each territory and it is easy to understand that, considering the resources available, not every one has the choice to base its development strategy in the tourism industry. According to this, classifying, evaluating and comparing, from a consistent and realistic point a view, several groups of resources becomes a necessary task and a precondition to define the touristic vocation of a region.

Meanwhile, after having selected the territory to be submitted to analysis and demonstrated that the destination has potential, the dynamic component of it, that is, the content of the destination, itself, must be evaluated, as well as its creation process, giving special attention to the agents involved. By other words, the secondary elements of the destination should also be evaluated. Those other elements have to do with its image and promotion strategy.

In this paper an emergent destination is analysed: the cross-border region of Galiza and North of Portugal, divided by the Minho River. This territory includes, in the Galician side, a judicial district, the Baixo Miño, with five municipalities – A Guarda, Oia, O Rosal, Tomiño and Tui - and in the equivalent Portuguese border, three municipalities integrated in the Alto Minho sub-region - Caminha, Valença and Vila Nova de Cerveira. Both areas share a first level touristic resource, the Minho River, with historical background and natural value. The methodology followed relies on a two-stage process. Firstly, taking the primary components, the consistency of the territory as a touristic destination was analysed, evaluating its tourism potential and configuration. In a second stage, considering the secondary elements, the components of the image of the common tourist destination were analysed, relying in the current promotion developed by the municipalities.

### **1. Resources and touristic destinations**

The analysis of the tourist activity is nowadays part of main economic and political agendas, being the tourism development a priority, frequently. However, the tourism sector cannot be analysed and, over all, prioritised from a conventional perspective, as

any other industry. In this economic field, in order to be efficient, the action must be correctly planned and driven; mostly, if a sustainable economic development is to be reached.

Ordinarily, the analysis of touristic destinations is focused on previously established territorial units (cities, regions, countries), over all, because it is easier to get data for these cases. However, this does not match with the tourism reality, since persons tend to travel to a place, to an area, not attending to administrative borders. This is specially the case of the European Union border regions that share attractive natural resources. These shared resources turn the neighbours closer, constituting an attraction for the touristic demand.

Therefore, the conventional analysis of economic territories does not seem to be adjusted for the bordering territories that share touristic resources and an alternative analytical model should be considered. This model should integrate all elements needed for the configuration of the touristic destination as a joint one and to check the validity of that strategic approach.

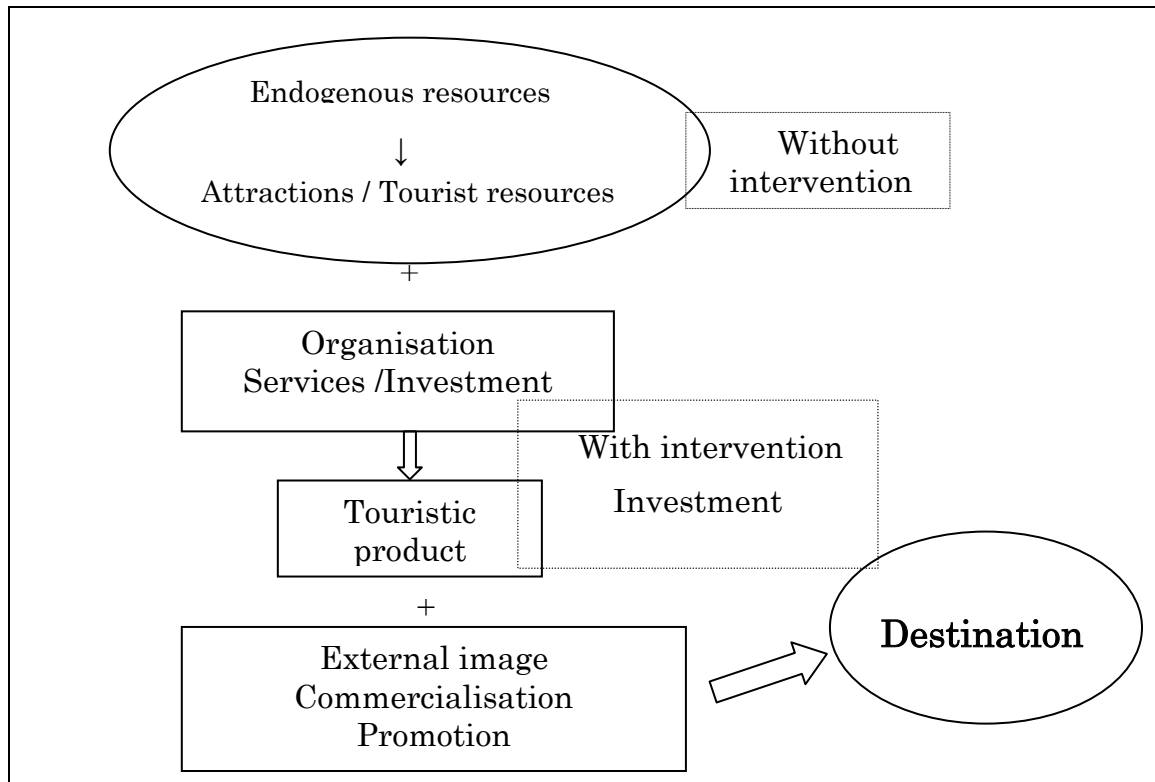
According with the endogenous development paradigm, the touristic activity should not be considered as a branch of the economic activity but as a set of activities which transform a set of resources, without destroying them. The destination can be defined as a territorial system, which integrates as basic attributes the primary elements that configure its attraction and motivate people displacement, and as secondary elements those which facilitate its consumption (lodging, feeding, drinking, trade, etc.).

Between the available definitions, the one that interests us is the definition that presents a destination as a place of consumption with a certain image, where a person can enjoy services and acquire material products that, considering a better or worse organisation, will transmit a certain perception of the territory (Vera, 1997).

This definition is appropriate to study cross-border regions, since it allows the joint analysis of distinct territories, through the design of a competitive touristic destination or region of destination. We should find all components of the touristic activity and its integration in the economy in this region of destination. In fact, it is the tourism activity that converts a territory endowed with certain resources in a destination. Through this approach, some of the analytical problems faced by areas belonging to different States can be solved.

The process of constructing a touristic system or region of destination is presented in Figure 1.

**Figure 1 – Process of a destination design**



Source: authors' elaboration based on OMT (1999), Zimmerman (1933) and Ritchie (1993)

According to Figure 1, the starting point is a set of resources, as we cannot forget that a territory already exists with a certain structure, endowed of characteristics that conform it economically, socially and culturally. From a schematic approach, we call that its generic resources.

Some of these resources have peculiar characteristics that turn them adequate to the tourist activity, that is to say, possess greater or minor attraction degree. Therefore, in the set of endogenous resources we can find the tourist attractions or tourist resources. What characterizes this type of elements is not having been submitted to any kind intervention, understood as intervention with touristic finalities.

The resources and attractions, also called 'attraction elements', are the primary elements of a tourist destination, which includes all components that motivate the tourists displacement to the destination. These elements are the basic factors that explain why visitors choose a destination, among others. As a consequence, we should analyze them in depth, in order to settle on the main attraction resources and to evaluate the potentialities of the area of study.

The next step will be to plan and implement the intervention, that is, to establish an organization, in a generic sense. It is that organization that allows taking profit from those elements that, although do not possess a specific attraction, help to satisfy the tourists demand. Using other words, we talk of touristic organization when a conscience of the tourism activity exists and the necessary steps are being given to create a touristic product. Therefore, the availability of touristic products is closely linked to the existence of resources, but not just tourism resources. Only touristic resources are not enough to guarantee the creation of a product. It will be the offer of complementary elements that will be the key for the implementation of touristic products (Torres, 2003).

The development and consolidation of a tourism destination, above all if it is the case of a destination of quality, are always close correlated to the valorisation of the local resources. These resources can be natural, historical, cultural, anthropological, etc., configuring what it is generically called a natural heritage or a historical heritage. The presence of these resources in the territory is important and its analysis in the process of planning the development of the sector should be understood as an opportunity to recover, to rehabilitate and to revitalize but, mainly, to value them as integrant elements of a touristic product, capable of increasing the activity, the employment, the revenues and the income of some sites.

The main idea is that, if a region wants to develop the tourism industry, previously it as to evaluate carefully the resources to affect to it, since these are the starting point for establishing the industry and will influence the type of activities to be developed, and therefore, the tourist's profile (OMT, 1996). As a consequence of this evaluation it will be decided if the area has the necessary potential for developing the touristic activity or the expansion of it (in the case of consolidated destinations) and the more convenient touristic segment to be developed. The evaluation must be understood as an exercise of viability of the tourism activity development, once, if it is verified an adequate potential, the evaluation constitutes the starting point for a more exhaustive planning.

It is worth mentioning that the expression touristic resource is, generally, understood as the set of singular attractions of a territory, which allows it to catch the attention of the visitors and tourists. On the other hand, the expression touristic product necessarily implies an economic activity, with a range of services design to provide satisfaction and pleasure to the visitors, responding to their expectations and motivations (Valls, 1996;

Vera 1997). Thus, the analysis must incorporate the characterization and the evaluation of the potential of resources present in the area of study.

## 2. Basic components of the destination

The tourist potential or the elements that configure a tourist destination depend, basically, of the amount and quality of the available touristic resources, although other aspects as the accessibility or the equipments/infrastructures available also determine this potential. In other words, to characterize a destination, it is necessary to evaluate the resources as well as to analyze the geographical space that configures this territory, not just as a resource but also as a location factor for those activities (Pardellas et al, 2001). Empirical data show that tourism activities follow singular space location behaviour. This way, the general location theory can apply to this kind of studies, but the specificity of the tourism activities and connected services sector must be present. In particular, one should account for the circumstance of the consumption of its products to take place where they are produced. This specificity implies, on the one hand, a direct and physical relation between the touristic resources and the goods produced from them and, on the other hand that the tourists have to displace themselves from their usual residence to satisfy that demand.

From the touristic point of view, not all the inventoried resources have the same value. The value depends on the nature of the resource (natural, historical, ethnographic ...) and on its characteristics relate to singularity, availability, etc.. Therefore, it is not enough to account the number of resources available in each municipality. It is also needed to consider the individual importance of each one. By other words, we have to be able to evaluate them.

For this purpose, we have selected the methodology of resources evaluation suggested by Leno Cerro (1993), which determines that the touristic value of a particular resource attending its nature and singularity, in agreement with the following equation:

$$V_{ri} = J_{pi} * \mu_i$$

where,

$V_{ri}$  = touristic value of resource "i"

$J_{pi}$  = primary hierarchy of the resource "i"

$\mu_i$  = weighting factor, attending to the nature of the resource "i"

This way, the evaluation of resources implies, by one side, the establishment of hierarchies. Those hierarchies are function of the importance and singularity of each resource, which can be classified as being of international, national, regional or local interest. On the other hand, it implies the consideration of a factor that weights the nature of the resource, once the hierarchy doesn't indicate the touristic value of the resource, but its importance inside of the own category. The weighting factor will allow transforming that hierarchy in an economic graduation.

The result<sup>1</sup> of the value of the resources factor resources for each municipality is given by the sum of the scores obtained by the **n** resources that it possesses.

**Table 1 – Resources value, by municipality**

|                | <i>Total value</i> | <i>Weighed value</i> |
|----------------|--------------------|----------------------|
| GUARDA,A       | 179,93             | 88,45                |
| OIA            | 150,31             | 73,89                |
| ROSAL,O        | 111,32             | 54,7                 |
| TOMIÑO         | 101,26             | 49,78                |
| TUI            | 198,7              | 97,8                 |
| CAMINHA        | 203,43             | 100                  |
| VALENÇA        | 160,38             | 90,56                |
| V. N. CERVEIRA | 136,35             | 67,03                |

Source: authors' elaboration.

To be able to compare the different factors inside the index of touristic potential we have to standardize the values, since they present themselves in different scales. That is why it was decided to express the results in a scale from 0 to 100 points, the maximum value corresponding to the municipality that reaches the biggest value from the addition of resources. The results show that the intermediate values correspond to Tomiño and O Rosal, followed by Vila Nova de Cerveira and Oia and the maximum values concern to Caminha, Tui, A Guarda and Valença.

As the next step, we have analyzed the second level of the destination: the touristic attractions complementary elements. Our investigation was confined to the offer of traditional tourism services, such as hotel accommodation, extra-hotel accommodation, tourism establishments in rural areas and restaurants.

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<sup>1</sup> The final results are shown in table1; the intermediate calculations and the weighting scales were not incorporated in the paper to prevent is extension.

Under the subject **hotel accommodations** we have considered both hotels and pensions available in the sub-region. The total capacity of the area of study in this item was 2767 beds, distributed by 3-stars hotels or lower, additionally to just two 4-stars hotels.

**Table 2.a – Hotels capacity, in Baixo Miño**

|              | Hotel 4*   | Hotel 3*   | Hotel 2*   | Hotel 1*   | TOTAL       |
|--------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|-------------|
| GUARDA, A    | -          | -          | 160        | 382        | 542         |
| OIA          | 140        | 110        | 46         | 68         | 364         |
| ROSAL, O     | -          | -          | -          | 60         | 60          |
| TOMIÑO       | -          | -          | 56         | 44         | 100         |
| TUI          | -          | 278        | 20         | 244        | 542         |
| <b>TOTAL</b> | <b>140</b> | <b>388</b> | <b>282</b> | <b>798</b> | <b>1608</b> |

Source: authors' elaboration based on Xunta de Galicia - *Guía de alojamientos turísticos 2002* (www.turgalicia.es)

**Table 2.b – Hotels capacity, in Alto Minho (3 municipalities in analyse)**

|              | Hotel 4*   | Hotel 3*   | Pousada   | Estalagem 4* | Albergaria | Pensão 2*  | Pensão 3*  | TOTAL       |
|--------------|------------|------------|-----------|--------------|------------|------------|------------|-------------|
| CAMINHA      | 186        | 104        | -         | -            | 56         | 60         | 75         | 481         |
| VALENÇA      | -          | 70         | 32        | -            | 64         | 150        | 58         | 374         |
| V.N.CERVEIRA | .          | 130        | 50        | 38           | -          | 86         | -          | 304         |
| <b>TOTAL</b> | <b>186</b> | <b>304</b> | <b>82</b> | <b>38</b>    | <b>120</b> | <b>296</b> | <b>133</b> | <b>1159</b> |

Source: authors' elaboration based on Região de Turismo do Alto Minho (www.rtam.pt)

The analysis of Table 2.a allows us to observe that Tui and A Guarda concentrate 3/4 of the hotel capacity of Baixo Miño. The importance acquired by A Guarda is explained by the fact of this zone to be traditionally associated with the sun and the beach tourism activity. In the Tui municipality case, two circumstances determine the hotel accommodation relevance. Firstly, the monumental heritage, with a historical center declared Artistic Historical Set by the Spanish government and, on the other hand, its importance as a travelling passage for people moving by road from Occidental Galiza and Portugal and vice versa.

In what concerns the Portuguese case, the establishments of higher quality are concentrated in Caminha, followed by Vila Nova de Cerveira, which has, since recently, a 3-stars hotel. This new hotel reduces the shortage of accommodation felt from time to time in this municipality. Such as in the A Guarda case, this offer is justified by the location of Caminha nearby the Atlantic Ocean and its endowment of diversified and qualified natural resources, like beautiful maritime and fluvial beaches. This resources



and facilities allowed the growth of the tourism industry, namely the one related with sun and seaside. In Vila Nova de Cerveira, the recent construction of the bridge that links the municipality to the Galicia margin motivated an increase of the touristic activity, being foreseen the starting of new touristic initiatives.

Regarding the establishments of lower/middle quality, the offer is led, in the Galician case, by Tomiño and O Rosal, where the situation is quite precarious, gathering very scarce hotel capacity, low-level of services and old establishments. In the Portuguese case, Valença leads in what respects to this type of lodging, position that can be justified by the kind of tourism that has established since long ago (tourists of passage, supported by the trade traditionally accomplished inside and outside the fortress; and, above all, visitors coming from the two sides of the border).

Generally speaking, the quality of the hotel service in the area of study is lower, presenting several structural deficiencies that should be surpassed if the region wants to qualify for being a more attractive tourism destination.

The concept of **extra-hotel offer** refers to those tourist accommodations that cannot be considered as hotels or pensions. It includes camping, touristic apartments, guests' houses and houses to rent. This kind of offer not only fulfils a complementary function to the hotel accommodation but, as is the case camping, constitutes a differentiated way of doing tourism.

**Table 3 – Extra-hotel**

|                    | <b>Camping</b> |                 | <b>Apartments</b> |                 | <b>TOTAL</b> |                 |
|--------------------|----------------|-----------------|-------------------|-----------------|--------------|-----------------|
|                    | <b>Nº</b>      | <b>Capacity</b> | <b>Nº</b>         | <b>Capacity</b> | <b>Nº</b>    | <b>Capacity</b> |
| GUARDA, A          | 1              | 1520            | 1                 | 26              | 2            | 1546            |
| OIA                | 3              | 1303            | -                 | -               | 3            | 1303            |
| ROSAL, O           | -              | -               | -                 | -               | -            | -               |
| TOMIÑO             | 1              | 519             | -                 | -               | 1            | 519             |
| TUI                | -              | -               | -                 | -               | -            | -               |
| <b>SUB-TOTAL 1</b> | <b>5</b>       | <b>3342</b>     | <b>1</b>          | <b>26</b>       | <b>6</b>     | <b>3368</b>     |
| CAMINHA            | 4              | 1360            | 1                 | 184             | 5            | 1544            |
| VALENÇA            | -              | -               | -                 | -               | -            | -               |
| V. N. CERVEIRA     | 1              | 300             | 1                 | 28              | 1            | 328             |
| <b>SUB-TOTAL 2</b> | <b>5</b>       | <b>1660</b>     | <b>2</b>          | <b>212</b>      | <b>7</b>     | <b>1872</b>     |
| <b>TOTAL</b>       | <b>10</b>      | <b>5002</b>     | <b>3</b>          | <b>238</b>      | <b>13</b>    | <b>5240</b>     |

Source: authors' elaboration based on Xunta de Galicia - *Guía de alojamientos turísticos 2003* (www.turgalicia.es) and Região de Turismo do Alto Minho (www.rtam.pt).

As the table shows, there are ten camping establishments available in the whole analyzed area, being its capacity more than the double of the one offered by the hotels, in the Galician case, and exceeding in 43% the hotel offer, in the Portuguese side. These data are of special relevance to understand tourism offer in the region and to design it as touristic destination. Any way, the category of the units and the level of activity allow us to speak of facilities with good quality of services.

In what concerns Portuguese ones, this type of establishments is concentrated in Caminha, which indicates that the offer is quite oriented towards sun and seaside tourism (3 from 4 camping, are located next the sea). The other camping, taking advantage of River Coura's beauty and of other natural resources of Caminha, supports the older and well-known Portuguese pop/rock festival of Vilar de Mouros.

With respect to the Galician border, the offer is homogeneous and based on the tourism of proximity with nature, thought for those people who wish a close contact with it. This fact, together with the own physical characteristics of the judicial district, turn the Baixo Miño an appropriate place to the increasing "green tourism".

The other lodging offer available in the sub-region is constituted by multiple particular houses to rent that, dispersed by all the territory, have, as a whole, a quite important meaning. This type of lodging offer is based, mainly, in personal relationship between proprietors and lodgers/tourists, which lasts since many years, in many cases. For its peculiar condition, it is difficult to quantify in absolute terms this type of offer, even because in most of cases these houses are not enrolled as tourism establishments. In this sector, the parallel economy competes strongly with the legally established one, with all the inconveniences that arise from this situation.

In what regards the **rural tourism establishments**, it is easy identifiable the complementarity of the two areas, since in Galician the major concern was put in offering a certain amount of rustic houses (Casas de Aldea e Casas de Labranza), of scarce historical and architectonic value, and in the Alto Minho the priority goal was to made available units conforming high standards of quality, mobilizing ancient and elegant houses of recognized historical and architectonic interest.

**Table 4 – Rural Tourism**

|                    | Pazos/T. Habitação |           | C. Aldea /T. Rural |            | C. Labranza /Agroturismo |           | Hotel Rural |           | TOTAL     |            |
|--------------------|--------------------|-----------|--------------------|------------|--------------------------|-----------|-------------|-----------|-----------|------------|
|                    | Nº                 | C         | Nº                 | C          | Nº                       | C         | Nº          | C         | Nº        | C          |
| GUARDA,A           | -                  | -         | 1                  | 10         | -                        | -         | -           | -         | 1         | 10         |
| OIA                | -                  | -         | 1                  | 16         | -                        | -         | -           | -         | 1         | 16         |
| ROSAL,O            | -                  | -         | 1                  | 12         | 1                        | 6         | -           | -         | 2         | 18         |
| TOMIÑO             | -                  | -         | 4                  | 38         | -                        | -         | -           | -         | 4         | 38         |
| TUI                | 2                  | 24        | -                  | -          | 1                        | 4         | -           | -         | 3         | 28         |
| <b>SUB-TOTAL 1</b> | <b>2</b>           | <b>24</b> | <b>7</b>           | <b>76</b>  | <b>2</b>                 | <b>10</b> | -           | -         | <b>11</b> | <b>110</b> |
| CAMINHA            | 1                  | 14        | 7                  | 76         | -                        | -         | 1           | 30        | 9         | 120        |
| VALENÇA            | 2                  | 12        | 2                  | 22         | 2                        | 22        | -           | -         | 6         | 56         |
| V. N. CERVEIRA     | 1                  | 16        | -                  | -          | -                        | -         | -           | -         | 1         | 16         |
| <b>SUB-TOTAL 2</b> | <b>4</b>           | <b>42</b> | <b>9</b>           | <b>98</b>  | <b>2</b>                 | <b>22</b> | <b>1</b>    | <b>30</b> | <b>16</b> | <b>192</b> |
| <b>TOTAL</b>       | <b>6</b>           | <b>66</b> | <b>16</b>          | <b>174</b> | <b>4</b>                 | <b>32</b> | <b>1</b>    | <b>30</b> | <b>27</b> | <b>302</b> |

Source: authors' elaboration based on Xunta de Galicia - *Guía de alojamientos turísticos 2003* (www.turgalicia.es) and Região de Turismo do Alto Minho ([www.rtam.pt](http://www.rtam.pt)).

Despite rural tourism, in several situations, to be an activity very strictly oriented in terms of resources used and relationship with the whole sector, it can play an important element in the consolidation of an attractive offer of autochthonous products.

Another aspect to focus is the so called **support offer**. In this concept are included all those establishments that, without having lodging capacity, satisfy some need related with the touristic activity. It is composed, basically, by restaurants, coffees-shops and leisure places, in common sense.

In this analysis we have retained only the restaurants, special protagonists in the range of the touristic offer of the area of study. One cannot forget that both zones are known at regional and, also, at national level by its exuberance in the offer of typical products (mussel, lamprey, alewife, mix of fish, kid goat, wine, *mirabeles*, etc.), conferring to its gastronomy great attractiveness. Additionally, the increasing interest, in recent times, for the good food as manifestation of the popular culture, transforms this activity in a key factor in the development of the tourist industry in this cross-border region.

**Table 5 – Restaurants**

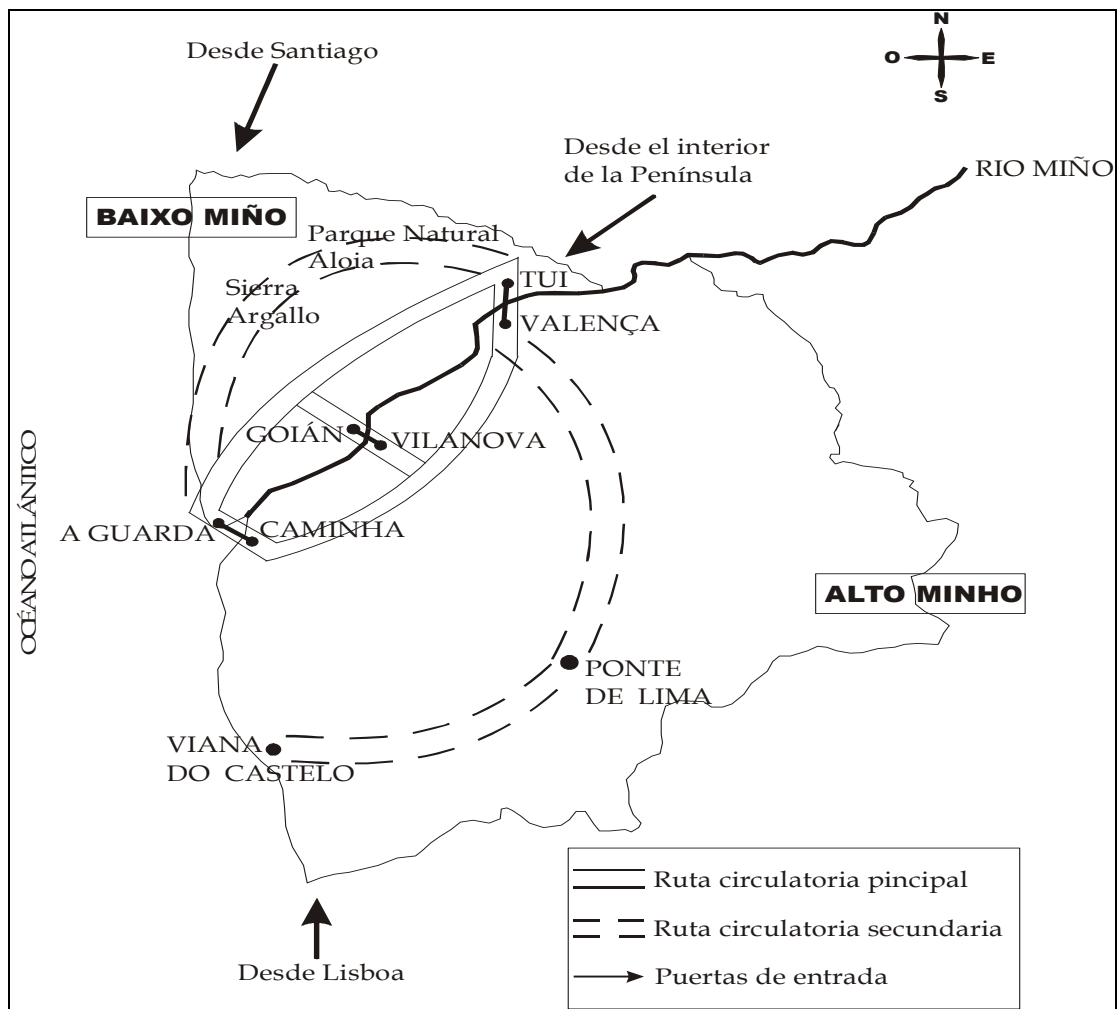
|                    | <b>Nº</b>  | <b>Capacity</b> |
|--------------------|------------|-----------------|
| GUARDA, A          | 22         | 1187            |
| OIA                | 7          | 440             |
| ROSAL, O           | 2          | 757             |
| TOMIÑO             | 5          | 309             |
| TUI                | 13         | 879             |
| <b>SUB-TOTAL 1</b> | <b>49</b>  | <b>3572</b>     |
| CAMINHA            | 46         | 4145            |
| VALENÇA            | 21         | 3361            |
| V. N. CERVEIRA     | 19         | 1444            |
| <b>SUB-TOTAL 2</b> | <b>86</b>  | <b>8950</b>     |
| <b>TOTAL</b>       | <b>135</b> | <b>12522</b>    |

Source: authors' elaboration based on [www.turgalicia](http://www.turgalicia) and [www.rtam.pt](http://www.rtam.pt)

Many of the available restaurants are quite large, oriented to local clients. In general, the situation is characterized by the lack of restaurants of higher category, where tourists can appreciate the typical products of the area at a high quality level of service, in consonance with the quality and potential of the local gastronomy.

Taking this information and the results we got from the touristic potential of the sub-region, a first territorial model of destination was drawn. The **Region of Destination** is shown in Figure 2, integrating the 5 Galician municipalities of Baixo Miño and the 3 border municipalities of Portuguese Alto Minho. However, it also turns the complementarities with the closer touristic municipalities of both territories, Viana do Castelo and Ponte de Lima, in the Portuguese border, and Baiona, in the Galician one. This region presents a common natural heritage defined geographically by the river and by the Atlantic coast, and shares also a rich historical and cultural heritage.

**Figure 2 – The Region of Destination**



Source: authors' elaboration.

### 3. The image of the destination

At this point, the “internal” elements of a new destination have been presented. These elements, which represent the intrinsic components or elements that motivate the displacement, can be synthesized in a range of touristic potential indicators of the territory. If we add to these indicators the space model designed, the destination is configured, having as a beginning the “classic” perspective: a set of resources and a territorial base.

Therefore, this paper aims to add some elements to the destination designed. These elements, which are part of the destination and have a clear influence on it, are called external factors, and are related with the image of the destination.

This way, the image of the destination is formed by a set of elements or individual attributes that clearly influence it. The definition of image refers to a set of attitudes, perceptions, beliefs and ideas that a person has regarding a geographic area. It is a “mental” representation that promoters try to pass to the public in order to influence their destination choice (Gartner, 1996). As a result, if one wants to analyze the destination, it has to analyze the image and the particular elements that form it.

In tourism scientific literature, the importance of the tourists` image of the destination is generally recognized, since it affects the individual`s subjective perception and, then, its behaviour and destination choice (Gallarza *et al.*, 2002; Echtner and Ritchie, 1993; Stabler, 1988; Telisman-Kosuta, 1989; Chon, 1990 and 1992).

The empirical studies carried out to measure the image of the destination are numerous and varied. Generally, the studies make use of combinations of multivariate and bivariate techniques, as well as of qualitative techniques, at least in a first stage (Gallarza *et al.*, 2002; Guthrie and Gale, 1991; Echtner and Ritchie, 1993; Ashworth, 1991; Selby and Morgan, 1996; Mazanec, 1994).

In our case, the analysis of the image of the new destination will be carried out through the study of the factors that determine the formation of the image of the destination, measuring and evaluating it.

This work is of special importance in the case of a destinations not consolidated or in process of formation, since it has been demonstrated in the literature (Baloglu and Brinberg, 1997) that the results obtained are very related with the image projected. This image is formed by a set of factors that should be analyzed in an isolated way and, also, altogether, once it is the group of attributes that determines the last image of the destination kept.

In the analysis of the factors that determine the image, planners should have present that multiple variables are relevant, with different degrees of influence. As a matter of fact, we can speak of exogenous variables and endogenous variables. The former refer to those factors of the image linked with the profile of the tourist consumer like the age, the education and travel motivations. This certainly has influence in the choice of destinations and planners have to keep that in mind. The studies regarding the segmentation of demand deal with it. Planers can try to adjust the characteristics of destination to the tourists, but they can not influence their tastes. Endogenous variables, on the other hand, are those related with the factors where the planner has a more or less direct influence. In this group we can find the variety (amount) and types of sources of

information relative to the destination. Having this in mind, the planner should have a direct influence in the design of these materials. This agent's role is crucial since the image projected should be very similar to the image designed in the planning process.

Starting from the study of the endogenous variables, we should note that the external image of the destination passed to the public can be scrutinized, as the more consolidated the destination is, the more visible it will be in the several sources of information used. Likewise, the consistency of planning process can be evaluated checking the adequacy between the available "endogenous resources" and what is offered to the market and, therefore, the proximity between the image projected and the real image of the territory. In this regard, the latter represents the set of products designed according the available resources, whereas the projected image will be the information of the destination we want to pass (sell) to the market.

In our study, the analysis of the image had a clear aim: to check the perception of the destination as common cross-border destination and the agents' commitment on it. The analysis was followed two stages: in the first one the promotion of the different municipalities was studied, through the analysis of the brochures and the web sites. Those are considered the two basic vehicles in this domain. This is the traditional methodology used in this kind of studies. The results we got will be presented in the paper. Simultaneously, as a second approach, contact was established with a sample of tourism operators, applying an inquiry-type to lodging establishments and restaurants, as well as interviews with the institutional agents, main actors in the promotion of the territory. Unfortunately, those results are not yet available. We hope to be able to release those data in a future paper.

The **brochures** are understood as a touristic pack that, despite the differences, simulates the pack of any product (Muñoz Oñate, 1997). They are considered as a basic element in the classic promotion of tourism destinations.

Much of the information available in a brochure about a destination and the products, themselves, can be considered by the consumers as essential, since they consider it as a database.

According to the objectives of this study, the brochures to tourists available in the destination's tourism offices were analyzed, in order to establish the current situation of the promotion of the territory. The brochures analysed are shown in Table 6.

**Table 6 – Brochures**

|                  | <b>GENERAL</b> | <b>SPECIFIC</b>  |
|------------------|----------------|--|
| GUARDA, A        | 3              | 0  |
| ROSAL, O         | 1              | 1 (Mills of O Folón)   |
| TOMIÑO           | 1              | 0  |
| TUI              | 1              | 0  |
| RÍAS BAIXAS      | 1              | 1 (Ecotourism and Rural Tourism)   |
| CAMIÑO PORTUGUÉS | 1              | 1 (Hostelry)   |
| AGARIMO          |                | 1 (Rural Tourism)  |
| CAMINHA          | 1              |  |
| VALENÇA          | 1              |  |
| V.N.CERVEIRA     | 1              | 1 (Art Village)<br>1 (Tourist and Cultural Route)  |
| VALE MINHO       | 1              |  |
| ALTO MINHO       | 2              | 1 (Gastronomic Sundays)<br>1 (Romanesque of Ribeira Minho)<br>1 (Santiago – Routes of Alto Minho)<br>1 (Alto Minho Festivities)<br>1 (Handicraft Route)<br>1 (Congress Centre) |

Source: author's elaboration.

The analysis of the brochures was carried out paying attention, specially, to graphical characteristics and content. The elements kept in mind were: front pages, texts, general information data, maps and plans, languages used.

In what concerns the content, not only the texts were analyzed but also the general data were considered, since this section usually collects data about the available services and its space localization. The graphical characteristics were measured through the quality of the front pages, maps and languages used.

In the case of Baixo Miño, we found brochures in which the front page does not shows neither the shield of the municipality nor the representative resources, as well as any corporative image of the judicial district as destination. From that, we can immediately conclude that a fragmentation exists among the municipalities, even if they offer the same product and are contiguous. Without any peculiar trace, those front pages do not have enough power to compete with an enormous variety of brochures that exist in a certain sale point. The only municipality that proposes an image is A Guarda, with attractive elements that can call the potential tourists' attention.

With respect to the Portuguese municipalities, each one of them has a generalist brochure, with equal structure. The front page consists of an image that identifies the municipality (in general, a monument) and a symbol of the Alto Minho's Tourist



Board<sup>2</sup>, presenting in the interior pages the representative heraldry of the municipality. The only exception, in what regards to this last point, is Vila Nova de Cerveira.

The maps of the Galician brochures, present, in general, a plan of the municipality, but without relating it with the remaining areas of the judicial district or bordering territories. In the Portuguese case, besides the map of the municipality, there is another one that inserts the municipality in the Portuguese Alto Minho. However, there is no reference to the other side of the border. The only exception regards the mention to the motorway that connects Valença and Tui, in the scope of the religious tradition of the Santiago Route (*Caminhos de Santiago*).

It is worth mentioning that, according to data of inquiries of visits (Pardellas, 2002), the real experience of the visitors of both margins of the river demonstrates an almost total permeability of the border. This is not reflected in the promotion materials developed by the municipalities of the analyzed cross-border territory. That is, in spite of the before mentioned evidence, the municipalities continue to ignore the possibility to establish a joint promotion of the area or to develop any sort of substantive touristic collaboration. The exception we have verified respects to a touristic-cultural route, created in the aim of a Cross-Border Cooperation Program joining Vila Nova de Cerveira and Baiona. There, we found diverse information regarding the two localities. However, there is not any reference to the closer Galician municipalities.

Despite the photos of the Portuguese brochures do reveal a better quality, most of the time the place that was photographed is not identified and, some situations, the images are not related with the text that accompanies them.

In what concerns the languages used, few Galician brochures present other language than the Spanish. Only A Guarda presents a brochure integrally written in Portuguese and Spanish. However it does not is translated neither in French nor in English. In the case of the Portuguese brochures, the used languages are the Portuguese and the English. Surprisingly, no brochure in Spanish was found, despite the proximity of the territories.

These verifications reinforce the idea of the modest visibility given to the destination and to its local and regional promotion.

In what the content of the brochures is concerned, one must underline that they should present only strictly necessary information and related photos and maps. That is not the

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<sup>2</sup> Official entity responsible for the touristic promotion of the respective area of intervention (in this case, Alto Minho)

Galician case, where we can find long texts, few photographs and maps and detailed explanations of some routes. The cases where some care was taken in the elaboration of texts and in presenting the resources were those of Tui and A Guarda. In the Portuguese case, the brochures present a small synopsis of the history of the municipality and/or a general description of the most emblematic monuments, information, maps and some coloured photographs.

Regarding the general information made available, stands out the importance given to this item in all the analyzed brochures. Under this head line one can find a wide list of restaurants, lodgings, leisure firms, etc.. It is likewise important to focus that the prices and hours of visit are not available in the information package.

As a conclusion, we can say that the brochures currently used to promote the municipalities we have selected to study are characterized by being essentially informative, including elementary information. Its content does not integrate data which allows to consider them touristic packs. Indeed, they can be considered as supports to promotion of the municipalities, but not real promotional materials of this cross-border common destination. The strengths of the brochures are the quality and amount of useful information that offer about the municipalities, besides the presence of some maps and plans. The weaknesses are related, above all, with the absence of information relative to hours of visit and prices. The little quality of photographs and texts included is also something to notice, and correct, of course.

Finally, we have analysed the **web sites**. These electronic platforms have converted lately into fundamental communication vehicles to interact with diverse types of public and other agents. On the demand side, the evolution of the travel culture makes the access of up to date information a value of our time. Besides, information of better quality is increasingly easy to obtain. These reality has transformed web sites and, by extension, the Internet in a basic resource.

The study of this territory as a tourist destination cannot forget this fact and, therefore, the use of web sites is analyzed as mean to promote its tourist offer.

The first step in that sense was to do the identification of the several items that compose the web sites used. These items are related to the different informative fields that compose the web sites. This classification was of quantitative nature, that is to say, the number of times that a certain element appeared in the pages was registered. Another possible classification was the one in which we could list the importance and relevance

of the different elements shown - presentation, animation..., similar to the one we have conducted to the tourist brochures.

The classification of the elements of the web sites intends to answer to our study central aim, that is: to analyze the current tourist products offered and the degree of exploitation of the potentialities of that territory, keeping in minds the perspective of implementing a sustainable and integrated development of the different activities of the area of study. In the next table the items found and their frequency of appearance in the web sites are shown.

**Table 7 – Items and their frequency at web sites**

| ITEM             | REPETITION |        | ITEM                   | REPETITION |        |
|------------------|------------|--------|------------------------|------------|--------|
|                  | BM         | AM     |                        | BM         | AM     |
| Handicraft       | Medium     | Medium | Hotels                 | High       | High   |
| Attractions      | Low        | Medium | Mills                  | Medium     | -      |
| How to arrive    | Medium     | Low    | Monuments              | High       | High   |
| Sport, adventure | Medium     | High   | Fishing, rivers        | Medium     | Low    |
| Spectacles       | Low        | Low    | Plan                   | Low        | Medium |
| <b>Enlaces</b>   | Medium     |        | Restaurants            | High       | Medium |
| Fairs, markets   | High       | Medium | Fluvial routes         | Low        | Low    |
| Festivities      | High       | Medium | Routes, tourist guides | High       | High   |
| Gastronomy       | High       | High   | Transports             | High       | Low    |
| Idiom            | Low        | Medium | Tourism of the nature  | High       | Medium |
| Images           | Medium     | High   | Rural Tourism          | High       | High   |

Source: author's elaboration.

BM – Baixo Miño

AM – Alto Minho

In a first approach to the territory, from the diverse web searcher of the Internet, we could highlight the amount of pages in which is incorporated information about the area. Interestingly, from a posterior analysis we could see that other territories make use of several resources of our cross-border destination as their own offer. In fact, in the search of Alto Minho in the main Portuguese web searcher, the first municipal web site listed was the one of a municipality that does not makes part of Alto Minho (even so, it is in a border area). The only official pages from municipalities of Alto Minho that

appear are those of two municipalities that are not object of analysis in this study (Viana do Castelo and Paredes de Coura).

The same way, using another national searcher, it is only possible to accede to the web sites of the municipalities of Caminha, Valença and Vila Nova de Cerveira through the site of the Alto Minho's Tourist Board, or searching directly with the address of the municipality. Once in these web sites, with exception of Vila Nova de Cerveira where the tourist information is very scarce, in the other two cases we can find important guides of the municipalities, having all the necessary information to program a touristic journey. Also the web sites from Alto Minho's Tourist Board and from Valley of Minho Municipalities Association have all kind of useful tourism information, including maps of the region and quite suggestive images.

Another aspect to underline is the strong exploitation that the establishments of rural tourism, and adventure sports firms and associations make of this sort of information.

The same way, we have searched the information available regarding the Baixo Miño. Using that head we got, in first place, the web sites of neighbour municipalities and, in other cases, not so closed, since we have reached Pontevedra (capital of the province, placed at 30 km), Sanxenxo and O Grove. These two last municipalities, specialized in tourism of sun and seaside, offer in its web sites visits to Baixo Miño as complementary product to its own offers. Even, they integrated it in their promotion.

Just as in the analysis of the brochures, a conclusion to retain is that the degree of use of the tourist resources of the territory in study is scarce, taking the existing potentialities. It is also reduced the information and systematization of the available resources.

## **Conclusion**

The starting idea of this paper is that the analysis of touristic destinations focused on previously established territorial units (cities, regions, countries) does not conform itself with tourism market reality in several situations. This has to do with the fact that persons tend to travel to a place not attending to administrative borders or administrative limits. In this paper we have analysed the cross-border region of Spanish Baixo Miño and Portuguese Alto Minho's equivalent area.

After having selected the territory of analysis, the following step consisted in inventory of tourist resources (natural, historical and ethnographic) and in its evaluation, considering its nature and singularity.

The existence of tourism resources, by itself, is not enough to guarantee the creation of products. This way, in a second stage, we have analysed those elements that, although do not possess a specific attraction, help to satisfy the tourists demand. Our investigation was confined to the offer of traditional tourism services, such as hotel accommodation, extra-hotel accommodation, tourism establishments in rural areas and restaurants.

The results we got allow us to highlight the lack of establishments of higher quality. This has clear implications in the profit tourism industry can take of the available resources. Namely, by one hand, it ignores or gives up of wealthier segments of demand, often interested in touristic destinations that present more diversity of resources, especially historical and cultural. By another hand, these tourists are, in general, more worried with the nature preservation.

Taking this information, a first territorial model of region of destination was drawn, integrating the 5 Galician municipalities of Baixo Miño and the 3 border municipalities of the Portuguese Alto Minho. The complementarity of this territory with the closer touristic municipalities, Viana do Castelo and Ponte de Lima, in the Portuguese border, and Baiona, in the Galician one, were also considered.

This cross-border region presents a common natural heritage, defined geographically by the Minho river and by the Atlantic coast, and shares a rich historical and cultural heritage. These attributes give it an enormous touristic potential, mainly if the economic operators consider taking a joint approach to the tourism market.

Visitors of both margins of the river have already understood that and travel through the area as if the administrative border did not exist, making clear the permeability of the border.

From the analysis of image of the destination we have tried to check the perception of the destination as common cross-border one. We have also tested the agents' commitment on it. We have verified if the promotion materials developed by the municipalities of the analyzed cross-border territory did reflect the reality of the touristic demand previously mentioned.

The data obtained allow us to conclude that the degree of use of the available touristic resources of the territory in study was reduced, mainly when compared with the existing

potential. We have also conclude that it is scarce the importance giving to the territory as common destination, which is reflected in its promotion. In fact, the municipalities (and private agents) continue to ignore the possibility to establish a joint promotion of the area or to develop any sort of substantive touristic collaboration.

For the consolidation of the territory as a tourist destination it will be needed that all the agents, publics and private, take action in order to attain a more efficient use of the available endogenous resources. A priority step in that direction will be the definition and consequent promotion of an image of the region as common touristic destination.

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