

The Pilgrim Consumer Behaviour Along the Way of St. James

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Abstract: The purpose of this study is contributing to increase the knowledge about Pilgrim's behaviour during their journey. It focuses mainly on food consumption expenses and habits. The study aims to describe the behavior of pilgrims along the Santiago route. A cross-sectional quantitative study was performed to achieve our objectives. 225 pilgrims fulfilled a survey to characterise their profile and their consumption pattern during the pilgrimage. Our results showed that most of the pilgrims describe themselves as tourist or mystical and transcendental. The pilgrimage lasts 13 days performing 23,6 kilometers for 6,5 hours per day. Regarding differences in the amount of money spent according to the pilgrim profile or the pilgrimage we only observe significant differences for the tourist profile intending to spend more money per day. In the same way, pilgrims performing less than 6 hours of walking per day intend to spend more money. In conclusion, it seems that the Saint James Way seems to attract more people to the local community increasing their availability to spend money locally.

Keywords: Pilgrimage, Saint James Way, Local economic impact, F&B, Pilgrims

1. Introduction

The Way of Saint James is a route that is increasingly sought after by pilgrims who choose Portugal as the starting point for a pilgrimage journey. Along the way, there are several places where pilgrims stop to eat, sleep or simply enjoy its cultural offerings. This study aimed at understanding how pilgrims manage their daily lives during the Camino de Santiago and if there are relevant differences between the various pilgrims. Thus, this research questioned whether it would be possible to differentiate some pilgrim profiles, through the characteristics of their pilgrimage, with the food factor and meals throughout the day (breakfast, lunch, and dinner) as the main factor.

2. Literature review

2.1 The Pilgrimage - Pilgrim's Motivations and Profiles

Pilgrimage is a phenomenon observed by several studies, as every year millions of people of different religions travel along paths to reach the sacred territory (Nadai,2010).

Pilgrimage movements can head to cities, temples, natural places, or geo symbols, where, in some way, the divine presence has been manifested, where are presents heroes or saint relics. In the particular case of the Christian religion, the pilgrimage makes to sacred places, because they had been crossed by Jesus, or for the cult of relics or for the cult of saints. (Otero, 2009).

The Pilgrimage is a process that gives rise to a change in the individual's daily habits where to move, the pilgrim spends more time than in his diary routine and feels some disturbing sensations, and some weaknesses, which culminate in the return to normality (Moderna, 1989).

Nowadays, in which everyday life is experienced so quickly, where evolution is constant and people have little time to live together, the Camino is a way of "escape" from routine (Antunes et al, 2017). The escape from routine and the availability to meet new people and places are some of the reasons to go on a pilgrimage. Other reasons to undertake a pilgrimage journey are the search for new experiences, the knowledge of the local culture, and the opportunity of outdoor living in contact with nature (Reis, 2007).

The Portuguese way is visited by pilgrims with different motivations, whether religious, spiritual, cultural or sports, among others. This diversity of personal appeals and perspectives justifies the search for more specific data on pilgrims (Ferreira, 2012).

The Federación Española de Asociaciones de Amigos del Camino de Santiago has studied the way pilgrims experience their pilgrimage, creating several pilgrim profiles. The pilgrimage can be characterised as lonely, when the pilgrim seeks self-knowledge, having no interaction with other pilgrims. This profile of pilgrim can also be defined as anti-social, someone who distances himself from other pilgrims, and follows the pilgrimage in

seclusion. The pilgrimage will be Mystical and Transcendental when pilgrims seek more spiritual experiences. In this case, the pilgrim seeks a supernatural experience, a sense of fiction framed in a witty route, this profile being thus designated as "Peregrino Paulo Coelho" – the name of a Brazilian writer who describes the Camino de Santiago in a magical vision with a literary work from 1987."

The pilgrim who seeks to enjoy the experience in a fun way, looking for new social contacts, goes on a Festive and Social pilgrimage where they want to interact and have fun, either with other pilgrims or with local inhabitants, living the Camino de Santiago without financial worries.

When the pilgrim seeks a Touristic experience, he wants to know the culture of the places he passes through. Thus, the Camino de Santiago is seen as a way of developing knowledge about places, whether in terms of history, gastronomy, anthropology, or ethnography, among other local peculiarities (Nadais, 2010).

2.2 Way of Saint James as a Driver of a Local Economic Development

The Ways of Saint James currently represent a symbol of European identity and a strategy for local, regional, national, and international tourism development. (Lois González et al., 2014). The Saint James Way is a phenomenon of pilgrimage and has already been transformed into a tourist product, that in addition to promoting the Galicia region, boosts various other regions and locations (Pereiro & Conde, 2005).

The Way has evolved into an economic phenomenon, generating income and employment, and consequently developing the places where it passes through. The Way of Saint James gave rise to the creation and/or transformation of infrastructure to support pilgrims, such as monuments, churches, hospitals, Albergues, and hotels. For the Way of Saint James to be a well-used resource, the collaboration and interest of the local community are needed. The relationship between pilgrims, the territory, and the local habitats could be useful to the places along the Camino and also to the improvement of the support of pilgrims without prejudice to the inhabitants. (Fernandez et al,2020).

Many of the territories associated with the Way of Saint James are interested in joining the route because it can be an interesting promotional tool. The majority of the towns are defined as peripheral territories and they look to the Way of Saint James as an economic and demographic opportunity to settle their population. These places will be able to take advantage of the Way of Saint James by defining a local promotion strategy, that highlights its endogenous products, creating thus its own identity (Toxo & Gusman, 2018).

Regarding the promotion of endogenous products, it is important to emphasize local gastronomy. Food is one of the basic needs of pilgrims and they enjoy tasting new flavors. Each place where the Way of Saint James passes needs to promote its regional gastronomy and build the awareness of local agents about the importance of this collaboration. In this case, it is necessary to emphasize the importance of the role of the restaurants as mediators of the tourist offer, and is important to highlight the fact that the tourist-gastronomic offer must be adapted to the needs of the demand (Pereiro & Conde, 2005).

To understand the demand it is important to take into account the motivations of pilgrims for the route, their profile, and their satisfaction with the Way, to define their consumption patterns on the territory and finally realize the direct impact of the Way on the income of local commercial spaces. The consumption level of pilgrims can be minimal along the route, but through factors external to the Way (The increase in low-cost journeys at Porto Airport for example) the number of pilgrims may increase. The increase in the number of pilgrims could be associated with an inter-municipal partnership, such as the Portuguese Way, which may be an interesting strategy to increase the income of the local business. From the aforementioned partnership, the Portugal brand is highlighted, being usual for pilgrims to return to the place, but at this time with a different mindset, like a regular tourist, bringing their family and friends. (Fernandes et al., 2012).

The knowledge about the Way of Saint James, the places that exist along with it, and especially the consuming behavior of pilgrims in each location, may be an important source of information to lay the grounds for a future social-economic local strategy to take advantage of the route. We will try to understand the perspective of different stakeholders on diverse cases of sites on the Ways of Saint James. We will present the case of Arzua, a place where several Ways crosses, especially the popular French Way, the case of Barcelos, a reference place on the Portuguese Way that is growing, and the case of Chaves, a border town inserted in the little promoted Portuguese Way of the Inside to Saint James.

The Camino de Santiago is unquestionably seen as a product and Xacobeo as a brand that transformed the Galician tourist sector (Solla, S & González, L.,2011). The use of the Way of Saint James as a way of combating rural depopulation gave rise to the opening of Hostels, Rural Tourism Houses, Hotels, restaurants, and other

support services for pilgrims. For this reason, the Way of Saint James is currently present in cultural, economic, and environmental policies, both at regional and communal levels (Maak, 2009). Thus, small companies in the restaurant sector took advantage of tourism and the route, generating a new economic dynamic in the sector (Santos, 2006).

The particular case of Arzua takes advantage of being a crossing point for several Ways of Saint James (Toxo & Gusman, 2018).

The Northern Way, and more specifically the French Way, passes through Arzúa and generates a large influx of pilgrims, which has given rise to the opening of several local businesses with activities linked to the Way of St. James (Díaz & Díaz, 2001). However, the success of the Itinerary is not enough to fuel local development. The Camino de Santiago has to be a way to create synergies between tourist agents and local producers, leading pilgrims to consume indigenous products. To seduce users of the Way of Saint James for a new visit, it would be important to invest in a good communication strategy of cultural and natural heritage, seeking that they choose a form of leisure with the greater associated expense (Toxo & Gusman, 2018).

It also seems evident that the gastronomic potential must be tapped, even more so when there is a consensus around the concept that tourism and gastronomy complement each other, and can act as a competitive advantage for local companies (Tellstrom et al, 2015). Arzúa takes advantage of the Way of Saint James to promote the village's cheesemaking tradition, also linking its history and local traditions to the Way of Saint James, defining a coherent tourist strategy (Lane & Kastenholz, 2015).

Therefore, for this Itinerary to be effectively a guide to the development of the territory, it is necessary to create a strong image of the destination based on a consensus between the Public Administration, tourism agents, and the local population, in a solid local strategy (Toxo & Gusman, 2018).

The Ways of Saint James is approached from multiple and interdisciplinary perspectives. There are still relatively few studies that make it possible to advance the knowledge of the impacts on communities traversed by the different routes in Portugal. However, the Portuguese stretches of Ways are perceived in the specific literature as a specific alternative to other routes that are already popular, like the French Way. This is an opportunity for the development of local populations in terms of economics and tourism promotion. Some initiatives are detected in small businesses, in locations that have their identity historically linked to the Way. This is said despite the evidence of a moderate impact of the Way (namely on the smaller populations crossed by it) and the risk of touristification (especially at the end of the route) maybe because of the breakdown of religious and pilgrimage phenomenon (Gonçalves de Freitas, et al, 2021).

The pilgrim on the Way of Saint James is a passing visitor. When asked how much they were willing to spend each day in Barcelos, 16.5% of the pilgrims said they spent up to 5 euros, 15, 4% said they spent up to 10 euros, 6.9% said they spent up to 20 euros and 6.2% said they spent up to 50 euros. The amounts revealed in terms of tourist consumption are low. However, the inquired businessmen claim that the Way of Saint James provided benefits to local tourism. In the last decade, there has been an increase in the offer of accommodation (32%), in the number of restaurants (20%), an improvement of the local economy (24%), and consequently the creation of jobs, making Barcelos as a tourist destination (24%). Furthermore, 70% of entrepreneurs understand that Barcelos needs more accommodation, but has enough restaurants. Barcelos business owners claim that tourism has grown up to 25% in the last decade, thanks to the Camino de Santiago, which describes a moderate growth (Gonçalves & Costa, 2020).

As for the Portuguese Way of the Interior of Santiago (CPIS), many of the pilgrims repeated the experience of pilgrimage on this or other Ways to Santiago, on Fátima, or on others of a religious nature. Eleven of them did the CPIS by Mountain Bike and 21 on foot. Viseu, Vila Real, or Chaves are the main departure points for these pilgrims. The duration of the route is between 3 to 15 days, and the "bicigrinos" (those who take the route by bicycle) are the ones who take the least time to reach Santiago.

On the same matter, an approach to the businessmen of the city of Chaves tried to understand their opinion about the local economic impact of the Caminho Português do Interior a Santiago (CPIS). For local merchants, pilgrims rarely visit the city of Chaves but they perceive and positively value the passage of the way. Thus, they indicate that CPIS benefits the community, increasing the promotion and the knowledge of the city of Chaves, as well as the influx of people and the liveliness of the streets, increasing the consumption, and giving rise to local economic development. However, most local traders show little interest in pilgrims who, compared to other types of tourists, have a lower level of consumption. When it comes to a specific accommodation offer for

pilgrims, there is the need for a Pilgrims Albergue located in Chaves. Relatively to restaurants, the local offer is big but this sector has been valued as weakly (Pereiro, 2017).

3. Methodology

This study uses a quantitative methodology having a descriptive, correlational, and transversal nature to achieve the study aims: to understand the economic impact of the Way of St. James in local communities, to distinguish the money spent during the Way of St. James according to the type of pilgrimage.

The research hypotheses were:

H1: There are differences in the characteristics of the pilgrimage (number of days, number of kilometers per day, and number of walking hours) according to the different profiles of pilgrims

H2: There are differences in the amount of money that the different profiles of pilgrims intend to spend per day

H3: There are differences in the amount of money that the different profiles of pilgrims intend to spend on the different meals per day (breakfast, lunch, and dinner)

H4: There are differences in the amount of money the pilgrims intend to spend per day according to the characteristics of the pilgrimage

H5: There are differences in the amount of money that pilgrims intend to spend on the different meals per day (breakfast, lunch, and dinner) according to the characteristics of the pilgrimage

H6: There are differences in the characteristics of the pilgrimage (number of days, number of kilometers per day, and number of walking hours) according to the pilgrim's socioeconomic level

H7: There are differences in the amount of money that pilgrims intend to spend on the different meals per day (breakfast, lunch, and dinner) according to the pilgrim's socioeconomic level

3.1 Instrument

The instrument used in this study was a questionnaire with 26 closed questions and one open question organised in two sections: sociodemographic characterisation, description of the pilgrimage, the definition of food consumption patterns during the pilgrimage, and products of intermediate food consumption.

In the first section, there were a set of questions related to age, gender, marital status, nationality, academic qualifications, job, religion, and food intolerances. In the second section, the description of the Pilgrimage, we delved into the planning of the routes, the pilgrim's habits along the route, and the amount of money spent on the meals, and we tried to define some pilgrimage profiles such as solitary, mystical and transcendental, festival and social, and tourist. There was also a set of questions about the pilgrimage characteristics, namely, number of walking hours, number of days to reach Santiago de Compostela, and number of kilometers per day.

3.2 Sample

Our sample has 225 surveys collected and a sample consisting of 158 (70,2%) females and 67 (19.8%) males, 44.8% (n=100) single, 41.7% (n=93) married. Participants are aged between 18 and 73, with an average of 44.7 years (SD = 13.25). Many of the respondents are German (36.9%), but other nationalities such as Dutch (6.7%), Canadian (5.8%), Spanish (5.3%), and Polish (4.9%) make up the majority of the sample collected. The academic qualifications of the population match a medium or higher level of education where 29.8% (n=67) have a Master's Degree, 23.6% (n=53) completed Secondary Education and 19.6% (n=44) have a Graduate Degree, with 49.3% (n=110) of the total amount of respondents being employed individuals and 21.3% (n=47) being retirees.

Regarding the pilgrims' religion, it appears that the majority of the respondents are Christian (61.8%, n=139), but 14.7% (n=33) are Agnostic and 10.2% (n=23) Atheist.

3.3 Procedure and Data Analysis

The survey was written in six languages (Portuguese, Spanish, French, English, German, and Italian) and it was used in person in March and May 2018.

Data was exported to the statistics program IBM SPSS (version 25), where the descriptive analysis for all the variables and the tests for the research hypotheses were carried out. To test our hypothesis – H1, H2, H3, H6,

H7 - ANOVA tests were performed. To test H4 e H5 independent t-tests were performed. The level of significance used was 95%.

4. Results

Our results showed that, regarding the pilgrimage profiles, 30,6% (n=63) were tourist, 29% (n=60) were mystical and transcendental, 24% (n=49) were solitary, and 16,5% (n=34) were festival and social.

Regarding the number of days that pilgrims plan to spend on the Way of St. James, this value ranges between 6 and 45 days, being the most frequent value 12 days with a mean of 13,75 (SD=5,43) days. Pilgrims intend to walk between 6 and 35Km per day, walking on average 23,6Km per day (SD=4,41). Concerning the number of walking hours, pilgrims intend to walk between 3 and 10 hours per day, with a mean of 6,51 (SD=1,2) hours per day.

In order to understand the pilgrims' forecasted expenses per day, a set of questions were asked about the total amount of expenses per day as well as the forecasted expenses considering the meals breakfast, lunch, and dinner. Per day, the total amount the participants predicted to spend varied between 6 and 150 euros, with an average value of 31 euros (SD=16,23). Regarding the meals, for breakfast, the pilgrims intend to spend 4,5€ (SD=3,51), for lunch 6,46€ (SD=4,02), and for dinner 9,57€ (SD=4,78)

In order to test our hypothesis and understand the differences between the several pilgrims' profiles and pilgrimage characteristics (H1) several ANOVA tests were performed. Moreover, we intend to understand the differences in the amount of money spent per day (H2) and the amount of money spent on the different meals (H3). As we can observe in Table 1, there were only statistical differences in the total expenses per day ($Z=3,050$; $p<.05$). Therefore, the tourist profile intends to spend more money during the Way of St. James than the other profiles ($\bar{x}=3,8657$).

Table 1: Results of ANOVA t-test for the Characteristics of Pilgrimage and Amount of Money Spent on Meals According to the Pilgrim Profile

	Z	df	p
Number of days	,418	3	,741
Number of kilometres per day	,253	3	,859
Number of walking hours	1,282	3	,282
Money spent during the day	3,050	3	,030
Money spent on breakfast	,244	3	,865
Money spent on lunch	,861	3	,462
Money spent on dinner	,542	3	,654

In order to understand the differences in money spent per day (H4) and the several meals (H5) according to the characteristics of the pilgrimage, several t-tests were performed. For the characteristics of the pilgrimage, we consider two dichotomous variables the number of kilometers per day, and the number of walking hours per day. For the number of kilometers, we considered up to 24Km and more than 24 Km/day. As we can observe in Table 2, there are no significant differences in the amount of money spent according to the number of kilometers the pilgrim walked per day.

Table 2: Results of Independent t-test for the Amount of Money Spent on Meals According to the Number of Kilometres per day

	t	df	p
Money spent during the day	1,268	214	,088
Money spent on breakfast	,254	216	,718
Money spent on lunch	,079	216	,822
Money spent on dinner	,744	216	,744

Regarding walking hours, we had considered up to 6 hours and more than 6 walking hours per day. As we can observe in Table 3 there are only significant differences in the amount of money spent per day according to the

number of walking hours. Therefore, the pilgrims that walked less than 6 hours per day, in mean, spent more money ($x = 33,148$).

Table 3: Results of Independent t-test for the Amount of Money Spent on Meals According to the Number of Walking Hours per day.

	t	df	p
Money spent during the day	1,268	214	,088
Money spent on breakfast	,254	216	,718
Money spent on lunch	,079	216	,822
Money spent on dinner	,744	216	,744

In order to analyse the differences in the characteristics of the pilgrimage (H6) and according to the amount of money spent on the meals (H7) according to the socioeconomic level of the pilgrim, an ANOVA test was performed. As we can observe in Table 4 there are no significant differences in the characteristics of the pilgrimage nor in the amount of money spent on the meals for the several pilgrims' sociodemographic levels.

Table 4: Results of ANOVA t-test for the Characteristics of Pilgrimage and Amount of Money Spent on Meals According to the Pilgrim Sociodemographic Level

	Z	df	p
Number of days	1,722	91	,193
Number of kilometers per day	,979	92	,335
Number of walking hours	,554	92	,459
Money spent during the day	1,208	128	,310
Money spent on breakfast	1,131	129	,282
Money spent on lunch	2,128	129	,225
Money spent on dinner	,974	129	,904

5. Discussion and Conclusions

The profiles used to characterize the pilgrims might not be the best way to predict their behaviour when it comes to how they conduct their pilgrimage or how much money they spend. In fact, the only relevant statistical correlation indicates that the tourist profile is open to spending more money along the way which one can say is an expected outcome. The touristic mindset of pilgrims might be overruling other more spiritual and practical dimensions of the journey, our results are in line with previous findings (Nadais, 2010). A social demographic level analysis also fails to help understand and predict pilgrim's behaviour along the way.

The length of the daily journey is not impacting on how much money pilgrims spend. On the other side, time seems to play a role in pilgrim's money spending habits as pilgrims who walk less than 6 hours a day are prone to spend more money during the day. This could indicate that more free time during the day leads to more money spent after the pilgrimage and that the time spent on the daily pilgrimage might not be so relevant in terms of overall consumption, as stated by Fernandes et al (2012).

A shorter daily journey might be related either to a decision to manage physical effort or a more fit pilgrim. This could indicate that a pilgrim's physical stamina (or lack of it) could also play a very important role in their behaviour, especially at the end of each day, as stated by previous research (Fernandes et al, 2012). A tired pilgrim just wants to rest and prepare for the next day, leaving practically no ground for site seeing and restaurant hopping.

Breakfast and lunch could be seen solely as convenience meals and consumer behaviours are mainly dictated by practical criteria and basic needs. Dinner could be seen as an important part of the leisure dimension of the pilgrimage and is highly influenced by the will to engage with the local people and their culture and gastronomy. These results are in line with previous studies (Tellstrom et al, 2015).

As a consequence, the combination of speed and number of planned walking hours a day will only generate more revenue for the businesses along the way if pilgrims manage to save some free time for engaging in extra-pilgrimage activities.

Having this in mind, the best way to harvest the economic potential of the way might be through informing pilgrims in advance on what can be done, seen, and experienced along the way so they include that information in their planning.

The research aimed to describe the behaviour of pilgrims along the Santiago route, taking into account their daily walking rhythm and spending patterns on food consumption, in order to understand the economic impact of this route in the places it passes through. Therefore our results suggest that most pilgrims describe themselves as a tourist or mystical and transcendental. The pilgrimage is relatively fast with about 6 hours of walking per day covering an average of 24 kilometres.

We observe differences in the amount of Money spend per day whereas the tourist pilgrims intend to spend more money. In the same way, the pilgrims walking less than 6 hours a day intend to spend more money per day. Therefore, we can conclude that the Way of Saint James seems to increase the availability of the pilgrims in spending money in the local communities during their pilgrimage contributing to the community development , as already stated by Toxo and Gusman (2018).

One of the major limitations of our study is related to the absence of information about the starting point of the pilgrimage. Therefore variables such as the number of walking days do not give the accuracy needed.

Future studies should specify the starting point of the pilgrimage. It would be interesting to study other Saint James Ways in order to understand possible differences according to the way performed.

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