



Rural-Urban Outlooks: Unlocking Synergies (ROBUST)

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Snapshot: Expressions of Urban – Peri-Urban – Rural Relationships

INVATTUR Institute – Valencian Institute of Tourism Technologies

Valencia, Spain

1. Brief Description

INVATTUR offers advice and promotes entrepreneurial tourism projects based on technology. It tries to improve the competitiveness and sustainability of the tourism sector in the Valencian Community through the development of R+D+I projects, thereby also fostering the adaptation to new trends in the tourism market. Through INVATTUR, the rural and urban spaces are given tourist visibility. Therefore, the Governance and Dynamization Plans are a way to create alliances between local, provincial and autonomous administration, in order to promote tourism development. This implies integrating and giving prominence to rural areas.

INVATTUR is part of a programme of the Regional Government (Generalitat Valenciana).

2. Questions and/or Challenges

- > Does the INVATTUR Institute promote interaction between rural, peri-urban and urban areas?

INVATTUR was born with the objective of facing a series of challenges not previously posed by the tourist sector in the region of Valencia. The interaction between rural, periurban and urban areas would be promoted through the transfer of knowledge, traditionally offered in the most populated areas (i.e. cities and coastal areas).

INVATTUR focus areas:

- To generate and transfer knowledge in the field of tourism.
- To facilitate the anticipation of the Valencian tourist supply to the tendencies of the tourist market.
- To promote a culture of innovation in tourism management.

- To develop lines of action in Research & Development & Innovation (R&D&I) adapted to the needs of the tourism sector.
- To develop market intelligence that supports decision-making in the field of tourism management.
- To collaborate with public and private research organisations from different geographical areas in R&D&I activities.
- To transfer knowledge to tourism companies and organizations, facilitating the access of the tourism sector to the most advanced knowledge, services and technologies.
- To strengthen the presence of tourism in basic and applied research programmes.

3. Main Insights

3.1. Indications of the application of the new concept of 'New Localities'

The technological advances deployed in recent years (Wi-Fi networks, mobile technology, cloud computing or Big Data) have brought about a change in our behaviour and in our living spaces. This generates towns and cities where there is synergy between technology and people to improve living conditions, performance and sustainability. This new paradigm implies greater complexity in the management of cities, so that current global competitiveness and new information and communication technologies have become essential for coordination, accessibility and interaction between inhabitants, businesses and urban centres themselves.

The technologies are applied, among other many elements, in order to maximize the quality of the stay of travellers: promoting the best destinations, providing quality information at any time, geo-positioning the resources of interest, maintaining a certain degree of security, etc. In addition, the entrepreneur can access information on public and private investment in big and open data. All this combination of factors will form what Rob Kitchin (2014) calls the "real time city", cities in which, thanks to our intelligent mobile and wearable devices, we will be able to make the best decision at any given time. Where to park, where to go to a restaurant or shop, the best place to do sports, which museum to visit, etc.

Being aware of this spatial change, one of the aspects in which the INVATTUR Institute contributes to our Living Lab is the intelligent development of the tourism sector, promoting a new business prototype to the possible consolidated destinations. The region of Valencia has traditionally been a sun and beach tourist destination due to the many good kilometres of coastline and the services and infrastructures built around it.

Rural tourism has emerged as one of the driving forces in recent decades

In recent decades, the tourism sector has emerged as one of the driving forces behind the development of the intermediate and mainly remote rural areas. This tourism model is increasingly popular and is complementary to seasonal beach tourism. Rural tourism has become a backbone sector of a territory where business opportunities are fewer compared to those found in coastal or urban areas. Transversally, tourism development creates a series of opportunities capable of reorienting and reconfiguring the existing relations between the rural and urban areas. Through the creation of a more economically attractive ecosystem, tourism investment generates improvements in access infrastructure, demographic benefits by fixing (or attracting) settlers, improving adjacent sectors, boosting the region in which the business is located, etc.

The INVATTUR Institute is aware of this trend and understands that modernization and innovation are indispensable in a type of areas (the rural ones) that is remarkable for its low experience in tourism compared to the coastal destinations.

3.2. Insights related to the broad area of 'Smart Development'

All tourist destinations in the region of Valencia (urban, rural and coastal) require progress in their planning and management to reach new levels of efficiency and effectiveness. This is a new stage in the evolution of destinations that requires changes in all areas, actors and actions that influence tourism activity, in order to ensure their future.

The *Instituto Valenciano de Tecnologías Turísticas* (INVATTUR) has been developing the project "*Destinos Turísticos Inteligentes Comunitat Valenciana*" (Intelligent Tourist Destinations in the region of Valencia) since 2014. The project defines the model of intelligent tourist destination and outlines the strategic lines to be followed in order to adapt the tourist innovation system of the region to the development of Intelligent Destinations.

Intelligent tourist destinations (ITDs) are derived from previous developments around the well-known Smart Cities, which come from the previous eco-cities, cyber-cities, knowledge-cities, etc. This concept of Smart City is internationally accepted, favoured above all by the interests of large multinational technology companies, which, in conjunction with public institutes, exercise good territorial synergies, provided that such projects are included in the political agendas of governments. It must be remembered that the Smart City concept, and therefore the one developed by INVATTUR as an Intelligent Tourist Destination, must not be exclusively a technological destination.

Rural tourism and the Intelligent Tourist Destination model

In the Valencian Community, rural tourism is at a slight disadvantage with respect to sun and beach destinations, at least in terms of the innovative trend and modernisation capable of turning a destination into an Intelligent Destination. It is evident that reality shows a medium/low degree of implementation in remote rural areas, hence the need to

deepen the line of work proposed by INVATTUR. It is necessary, therefore, that more tourist municipalities channel their management towards the Intelligent Tourism Destination model in order to improve its adaptation to the digitalization of tourist activity, its levels of competitiveness and sustainability. Integrated tourism development has been carried out through LEADER initiatives. However, it is currently important to highlight the influence of social media in the promotion of rural tourism. Thus, initiatives such as the "Creaturisme Programme" established a catalogue around the concept of "living Mediterranean", with rural promotion (food, culture, health, heritage) as a line of work. In this case, 17 Tourism Governance and Dynamisation Plans are currently being drawn up, taking into account the rural environment.

Through the Governance Plans we want to strengthen the rural space, as a space of consumption that connects with coastal tourism. In this way it is sought that any tourist can be it so much in rural zones of interior as in zones traditionally tourist. Here, the regional administration plays an important role, covering the entire Valencian community with various tourist plans. It is, therefore, the search for a balance between two well-differentiated types of tourism. These aspects are possible thanks to the incorporation of new technologies in the tourism sector. The beneficial resources are found in the creation of various markets associated with tourism, in addition to other positive aspects such as alleviating rural depopulation.

Four approaches to foster an intelligent development of tourism

With the main objective of making tourist destinations into smart cities, the intelligent development of tourism is approached in four ways.

- > Sustainability, through operational focus, efficiency, improved positioning and accessibility.
- > Connectivity, through new technologies and the basis of digital economy.
- > The new information systems (big data).
- > Innovation: cluster approaches, Smart Tourism Labs.

The digital transformation is a fundamental change in the business model. It is the opportunity to improve, to be more effective and to open new horizons. All thanks to the new information and communication technologies.

3.3. Other insights that could be relevant for further work

The important development that the restaurant sector has been experiencing in recent years is mainly due to new food trends linked to new consumption patterns. The new consumer is not looking for the simple fact of "eating" but also wants to experience sensations through the different dishes, thus enriching their gastronomic culture.

It is becoming increasingly clear that the fusion of cuisine and science is a key factor in innovating in restaurants and being or becoming more competitive. From the scientific point of view, it is possible to improve traditional culinary techniques, study gastronomic problems, improve textures, enhance flavours and a big number of other possibilities.

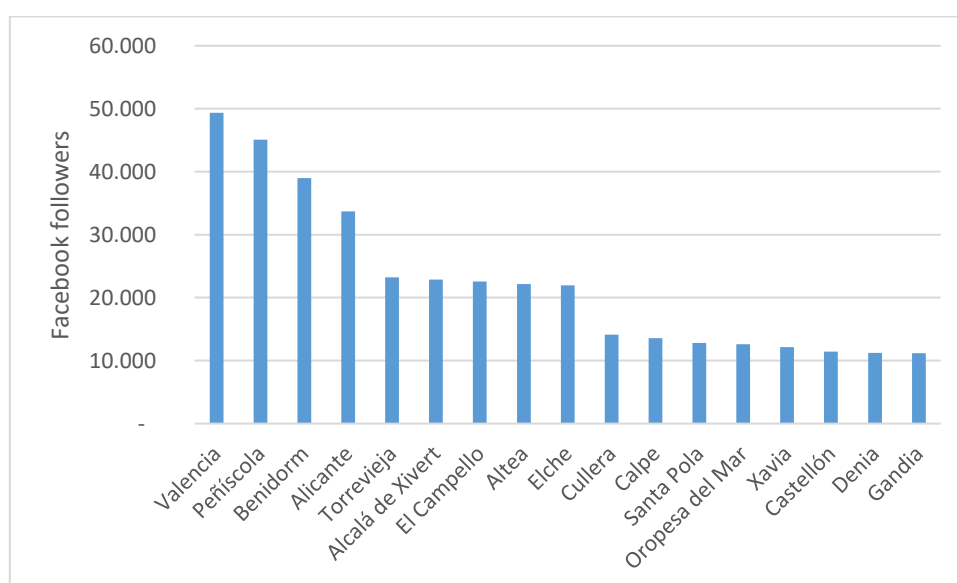
Within this panorama, gastronomy has also become an important focus of cultural interest for travellers, who want to know the place they visit through its gastronomy. Thus, gastronomy can be used as a tourist resource, becoming unique in the area and associated with quality tourism.

4. Data Sources and Indicators

Tourism is one of the most powerful economic drivers in the region of Valencia or Valencian Community (*Castellón, Valencia* and *Alicante*). Almost 50 % of the municipalities in the region have been declared "tourist municipalities" by the regional government.

Social networks have become an indispensable tool when it comes to acquiring information directly from the user. This example is the "Likes" on Facebook of the tourist destinations of the region during the first half of 2017:

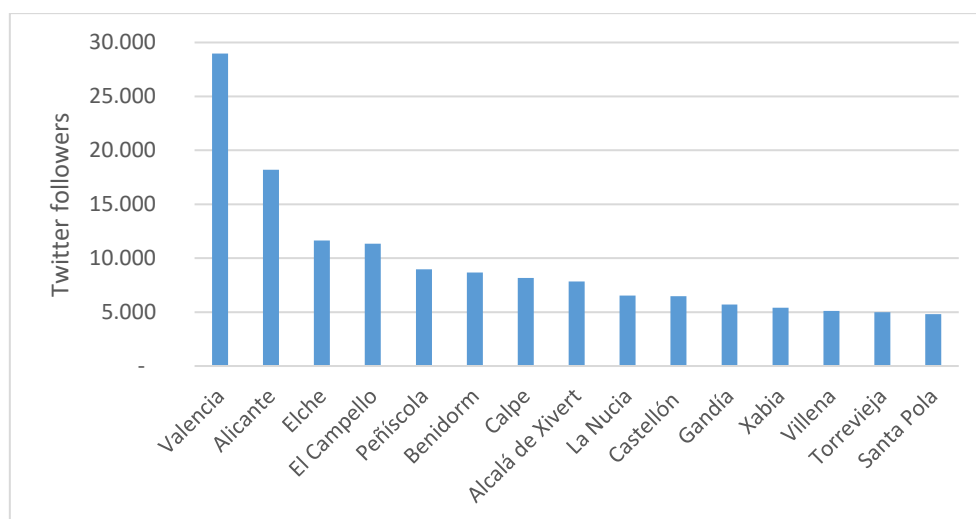
Figure 1. Facebook of the tourist destinations of the region during the first half of 2017.



Source: Tourist Destination RSS Barometer. <https://www.slideshare.net/invattur/ix-barometro-de-redes-sociales-de-los-destinos-turisticos-cv>

Twitter followers of tourist destinations in the region of Valencia during the first semester of 2017:

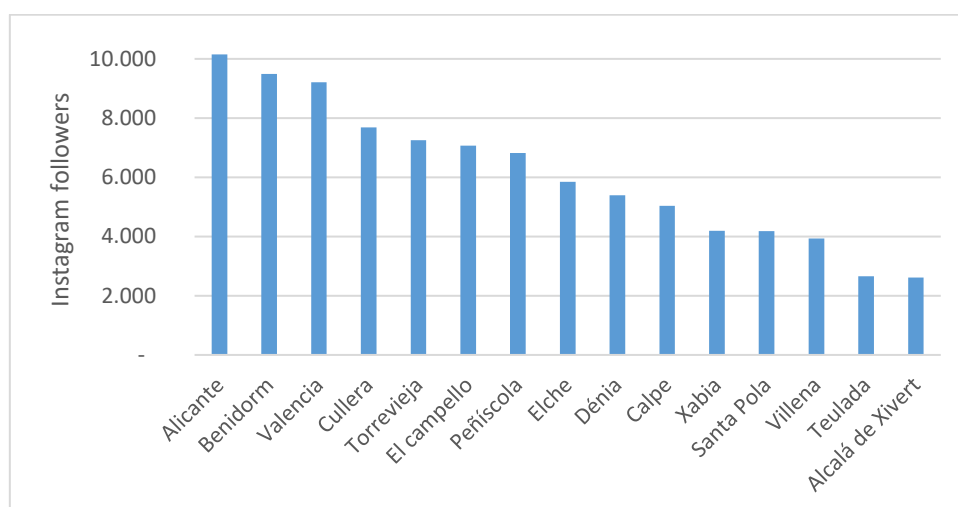
Figure 2. Twitter followers of tourist destinations in the region of Valencia



Source: Tourist Destination RSS Barometer. <https://www.slideshare.net/invattur/ix-barometro-de-redes-sociales-de-los-destinos-turisticos-cv>

Instagram followers of tourist destinations in the region of Valencia during the first semester of 2017:

Figure 3. Instagram followers of tourist destinations in the region of Valencia

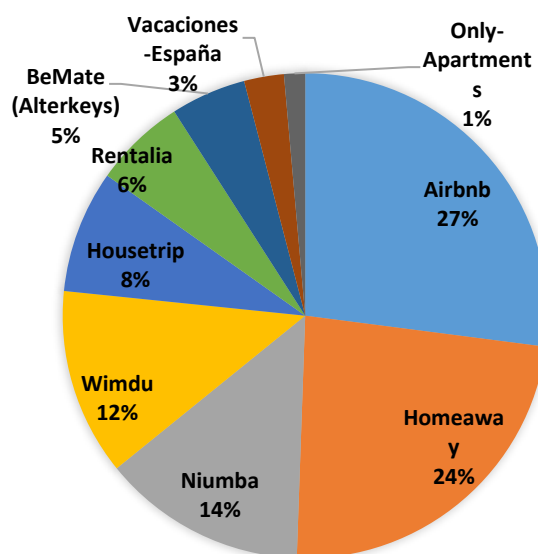


Source: Tourist destinations SSR barometer. <https://www.slideshare.net/invattur/ix-barometro-de-redes-sociales-de-los-destinos-turisticos-cv>

The social and economic impacts on tourist destinations resulting from the exponential increase in the rental of short-term tourist accommodation are driven by new marketing models and channels.

Figure 4. The social and economic impacts on tourist destinations resulting from the exponential increase in the rental of short-term tourists

Site	Number of properties	Number of places
Airbnb	75.390	287.236
Homeaway	65.541	249.711
Niumba	37.945	144.570
Wimdu	34.741	132.363
Housetrip	22.784	86.807
Rentalia	17.059	64.995
BeMate (Alterkeys)	14.000	53.340
Vacaciones-España	7.400	28.194
Only-Apartments	3.909	14.893
Total	278.769	1.062.109



Source: EXCELTUR (2015) <http://www.exceltur.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/06/Alojamiento-tur%C3%ADstico-en-viviendas-de-alquiler-Impactos-y-retos-asociados.-Informe-completo.-Exceltur.pdf>

In the case of coastal destinations, 40 % of these develop actions to become an intelligent tourist destination, above all linked to the application of new technologies. 45 % of the destinations have not considered the possibility of becoming an intelligent tourist destination, and the remaining 15 % do not consider it a priority issue.

In remote rural municipalities those percentage decreases significantly. Only one in three (33 %) develops actions linked to Intelligent Tourist Destinations. 46 % do not carry out any action aimed at intelligent development and the remaining 20 % do not consider it a priority. The actions in this case are usually dedicated to the creation of new products linked to the territory and in a very minor case to the implementation of new technologies: QR codes, apps, webs, social networks.

Table 1 Data / Indicators for INVATTUR

Data / Indicator	Source
Tourist Municipalities in the Region of Valencia (Valencian Community)	Valencian Tourism Agency. www.turismo.gva.e
Municipalities that carry out actions to become an Intelligent Destination	White Paper for a New Tourism Strategy for the Valencian Community
Number of business projects supported by Invattur	Invattur undertakes 2013 - 2017 https://es.slideshare.net/invattur/informe-de-seguimiento-de-la-comunidad-invattur-emprende-20132017
Impact of social networks on Valencian tourism	Barometer of social networks of the Destinations of the Valencian Community: https://es.slideshare.net/invattur/x-barometro-de-redes-sociales-de-los-destinos-turisticos-cv

5. Critical Appraisal of Data Use

To know the impact, it is necessary to know what companies are involved in these initiatives (shops, restaurants, accommodation, travel agencies, etc.), where they are located, and if employment is being promoted through the projects. In this way we could know if Intelligent Development, applied to tourism, is succeeding.

6. References

Institutional references

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