

GLAMPING IN LOW-DENSITY TERRITORIES: THE CASE OF SANTO ALEIXO DA REASTAURAÇÃO

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Abstract

The promotion of tourism in rural areas, in a sustainable and appealing manner, through the specification and diversification of tourist offerings, becomes fundamental for the valorization, visibility, and notoriety of the communities living in these spaces. This study analyzes a new concept of tourist activity, Glamping, whose mission is to promote territories in a sustainable and socially appealing way, where the articulation of natural heritage with tourism seeks to contribute to making territories and rural spaces more charming. In this context, this study emerges with the purpose of investigating "How does investment in enriching the tourist accommodation offer, particularly through the Glamping option, constitute an added value for the local development of an Alentejo village?" It was based on the need to identify the direction of change that a strategic analysis of a tourist project in rural areas was carried out, aiming to formulate recommendations with intervention proposals to support its implementation. The study thus sought to inquire about the strategic challenges and associated objectives, the actors involved, the conflicts, and alliances around these objectives, using the ACTors, Objectives, Force Relations Method (Saragoça et al., 2017 and Pescada, 2019) and resorting to the combination of different data collection techniques (interviews and documentary research) and analysis (PESTEL and SWOT). The results of the strategic analysis revealed that: the main alliances are structured around the objectives "contribute to a more sustainable tourism, aiming at the preservation and conservation of all natural and cultural heritage" and "create new jobs," with strong mobilization from the Local Authority, the Social Center, and the Regional Development Administration; the Local Development Association stands out as the most influential actor, and among the less dependent actors, the Social Center emerges, which, being a local institution, is largely unaffected by the influences of the actors involved. Observing some constraints, especially where trends that jeopardize the implementation and sustainability of the project intersect with the acquisition of financial and human resources, led to formulating as strategic recommendations the need for an economic and social feasibility study and the creation of partnerships and alliances among local and regional actors

Keywords: Strategic Analysis, Community Development, Rural tourism, Glamping

JEL classification: J30, J80, O10, M10, R10, R58

1. Introduction

In recent years, competitiveness, in the search for new audiences, between regions has grown strongly. New challenges arise as a consequence of changes driven by new economic conditions, wars and pandemics. In response to these events, territories must present factors that allow them to place their products or services on the global market. As a response to these profound changes in the pattern of economic activity, this study analyzes a new concept of economic activity, Glamping. Glamping's mission is to promote the territory, respecting environmental and social sustainability and seeking to increase the competitiveness of territories. The sustainable and attractive promotion of tourism in rural areas, through the specification and diversification of tourist offers, is fundamental for the valorization, visibility and notoriety of these spaces. The articulation of natural heritage with tourism has been important in the response to these challenges, since the integration of heritage, traditions, genuineness and identity in the development of tourist activities can contribute to the attractiveness of these spaces. Natural and cultural heritage is an asset of the greatest importance in valuing territories and promoting them as excellent tourist destinations (Barros, 2009 and Souza and Chiodi, 2023). To recognize the potential attractiveness of the natural and cultural heritage of the Alentejo, the Monte of Castanheiro Agritourism project – Country Club & Glamping was created, with the mission of valuing endogenous resources through the promotion of creative and cultural activities in a village in the municipality of Moura – Saint Aleixo of the Restoration. Based on the need to evaluate the conditions for the implementation of a rural tourism enterprise in an Alentejo village, the following research question was defined “How does investment in enriching the tourist accommodation offer, particularly via the Glamping option, constitute a more -value for the sustainable development of Santo Aleixo da Restauração?” To answer this question, we opted for an exploratory research methodology, using semi-direct interviews, as a privileged technique for data collection. Interviews were carried out with six local stakeholders, with the aim of understanding their perceptions about the added value of implementing this project for the sustainable development of the village of Santo Aleixo de Restauração.

2. Literature Review

Considering the positive impact on employment, productivity, innovation and economic growth, entrepreneurship and entrepreneurs have taken on a very relevant role in the development of regions (Sousa et al., 2019). There are different opinions on the meaning of entrepreneurship, Sarkar (2014, p 47) mentions that entrepreneurship is “being in the market between supplier and consumer”, on the other hand, Hisrich et al. (2014) refer to entrepreneurship as a “process of creating something new with value by devoting the necessary time and effort, assuming the corresponding financial, psychological and social risks and receiving the consequent rewards of economic and personal satisfaction and independence” (p 29). For rural development to occur, the entrepreneur is the fundamental actor as a guide for the enterprise. However, for innovation and development to occur in a region, it is necessary to establish a high level of incorporation of resources, local integration and connection between contexts (Kibler, Kautonen & Fink, 2014; Della Corte et al., 2018; Perkins et al., 2020). Müller and Korsgaard (2018) highlight two concepts that link rural enterprise with spatial context, spatial embeddedness (local integration) and non-local connection. These two terms refer to local integration as a characteristic arising from entrepreneurs who use the specific resources of the local area. Spatial embeddedness refers to access to resources that presuppose a process of passing through networks and local communities. In turn, non-local connections refer to rural entrepreneurs' connections beyond the local area looking for markets, partners and resources. This means that entrepreneurs use other means outside the local area without exclusivity to local resources (Müller & Korsgaard, 2018). The study by Müller and Korsgaard (2018) allowed us to verify that the spatial context influences entrepreneurship, mainly through the analysis of two mechanisms such as resource endowment and spatial connections. Entrepreneurship in rural spaces has been an important response to dynamizing territories, making them more cohesive and competitive (Osunmuyiwa & Ahlborg, 2022). Rural spaces have undergone changes that have resulted in population loss and the abandonment of agricultural activities (Castillo et al.,

2020). In recent years, awareness of the gravity of the situation has become clear and measures and policies have been formulated and implemented to promote the growth of the most socially and economically disadvantaged rural areas (Klofsten et al., 2020). On the one hand, there has been an attempt to take advantage of the agricultural potential of the fields through a focus on organic agri-food products and those of controlled origin, on the other hand, there has been a patrimonialization of a diversity of local resources, such as natural, historical and monumental (Palmi & Lezzi, 2020). The tourist exploitation of these heritage sites and the touristification of rural areas and communities has been growing through investment in tourist ventures and activities (Rosalina et al., 2021; Lourdes, 2023; Marques, 2023). Investment in tourist activities in rural spaces, in a sustainable and attractive way, through the specification and diversification of tourist offers, has contributed to the appreciation, visibility and notoriety of these spaces (Souza & Chiodi, 2023). The articulation of natural heritage with tourism has been a way of responding to these challenges, to the extent that the integration of heritage, tradition, genuineness and identity in the development of tourist activities can contribute to the attractiveness of these spaces (Lourdes, 2023). Natural and cultural heritage is an asset of the greatest importance in valuing territories and promoting them as tourist destinations of excellence (Barros, 2009; Lourdes, 2023; Souza & Chiodi, 2023). Rural tourism is seen as an activity that generates economic development for rural areas, stimulating many other local economic activities that interact with it, and is therefore considered fundamental for the development of the most ruralized regions. This type of tourism contributes to boosting activities, such as handicrafts, the production and sale of traditional products on farms, including certified agricultural products and foodstuffs, transport services, entertainment, guides, among others (Lourdes, 2023; Marques, 2023; Souza & Chiodi, 2023). Several authors have shown that positive socioeconomic effects sustain tourism support behavior. The potential of tourism is based on the natural and cultural resources incorporated into the location. The main challenges are greater assertiveness on the part of the local government, improvements in infrastructure and services, collaboration between actors and social participation. Research highlights the importance of tourism for the diversification of the rural economy and guides managers and institutions with proposals aimed at boosting the revitalization of the rural environment (Kalantaridis, 2010; Lang & Novy, 2014; Souza & Chiodi, 2023).

Tourism is a human phenomenon that involves the voluntary and temporary movement of people to places other than their usual places of residence, motivated by the desire for leisure activities. In this sense, it can be understood as a complex system of relationships between people (those who visit and those who are visited), either through movement between geographic points instigated by curiosity or the need to travel outside their usual places of residence, or because it is an economic activity or industry with a huge impact on the lives of many cities, regions and countries and which employs around 100 million people worldwide (Quinteiro & Baleiro, 2017). Tourism in Rural Spaces (TER) emerged in Portugal in the late 1970s, in an experimental way, having been given the name "housing tourism" as a way of taking advantage of the architectural, historical and landscape richness of some regions (Gonçalves, 2016). TER is a form of tourism that aims to allow more direct and genuine contact with nature, agriculture and local traditions, in a rural environment. TER are accommodations that must be installed in rural areas, having inherent to them "a set of activities and services carried out and provided for remuneration in rural areas, according to different types of accommodation, complementary activities and services for entertainment and tourist entertainment, with a view to providing customers with a complete and diversified offer". This type of accommodation must have typical architectural features of the region and must be sustainable. Nature Tourism (TN) emerges as "a result of the evolution of the model of society in which we live, in mutual respect, in the involvement and promotion of natural resources and life" (Rebocho & Correia, 2017, p.2). The TN is defined as "the tourist product, made up of establishments, activities and services of accommodation and environmental tourist entertainment carried out and provided in areas integrated in the National Network of Protected Areas (...) comprises houses and tourist enterprises of Tourism in Space Rural". Therefore, a TER establishment is considered a TN only if it is located within a Protected Area (PA) (Decree-Law no. 56/2002, 2002).

A glamping project encompasses the two types of tourism mentioned above, TER and TN, however, in addition to these types of tourism, it is equally important to address the notion of camping. The word glamping is a combination of two words whose meanings are slightly different, camping and glamour. Camping is an activity carried out outdoors. Participants leave their homes in urban areas and typically camp in nature, where they spend the night in a campsite or other preferred location. Camping involves the use of tents, caravans, huts or other types of provisional accommodation. The glamor associated with traditional camping has led to a new type of accommodation, glamping. Glamping “emerges as a result of the continued increase in this comfort, associated with the experience of sleeping inside a tent with all the comfort of the best hotels, valued by the location” (Henriques, 2016, p.31). Authors like Budiasa, Suparta and Nurjay (2019) define glamping as a set of camping activities that “do not neglect comfort and luxury”. They also mention that glamping is “a luxurious camp with extraordinary nature-based settings”, and that “it appears as a comfortable and more expensive service (...)” (p. 1). In this sense, glamping is considered an innovative concept, a “new way of traveling and camping with glamour, in which we seek a differentiating, memorable experience, in a non-traditional type of accommodation, maintaining the comfort and luxury of luxury accommodation. high quality” (Long, Lane & Gartner, 2000; Rebocho & Correia, 2017). This type of accommodation combines the “luxury of a hotel with coexistence with nature”, offering holidays in tents (Henriques, 2016, p. 10), but with the luxury of a five-star hotel always present throughout the entire journey. stay. According to MacLeod (2017), glamping emerged in the United Kingdom and Ireland at music festivals where some of its market segment were people over 30. So that some of this target audience could be more comfortable (and taking into account “some disposable income above average” and the “high profile of some of these events”), the need arose to create some VIP areas, where there were a range of very attractive and charming accommodation and services. The exclusivity of this accommodation and the services associated with it led its practitioners to look for similar facilities elsewhere (MacLeod, 2017). The experience in these accommodations was designed to provide its customers with a personalized service and offer organic products, as well as providing contact with nature and connection with the local community (Boscoboinik & Bourquard, 2012). The increasing demand for comfort and luxury in campsites has driven the growth of the glamping concept (Brooker & Joppe, 2013). However, it is still a topic that is very little explored in the literature, but is increasingly sought after by tourists, which justifies investigations around it (Rebocho & Correia, 2017).

3. The Monte of Castanheiro Project – Country Club & Glamping

The design of the Monte of Castanheiro – Country Club & Glamping project has as its main strategic objective the promotion of the village of Santo Aleixo da Restauração, respecting environmentally sustainable and socially stable and attractive rules. This project aims to promote an increase in the competitiveness of agriculture that is currently practiced on this farm, but above all taking into account the need for restructuring, development and innovation, essential in these rural areas, where the diversification of economic activities is fundamental for the sustainability of the rural world. The articulation of natural heritage with tourism aims to be present in a very intimate way, as heritage, tradition, authenticity, identity and tourist activities can contribute to the appreciation, visibility and notoriety of this territory. Guided, hunting or equestrian experimentation routes and Mediterranean products and flavors will also be valued in the project. Nowadays, there is an increasing attraction for rural areas. More and more people tend to want to know rural areas, the habits and customs of the people who live there, so Monte of Castanheiro – Country Club & Glamping will give its customers the opportunity to get to know the local population, their habits and customs.

4. Methodology

In order to evaluate the conditions for implementing the Country Club & Glamping project in the village of Santo Aleixo da Restauração, an exploratory and descriptive investigation was carried out, using qualitative methods and techniques, as tools to support the formulation of intervention proposals that support a rural tourism project in this Alentejo village. The study defined the following specific objectives: 1) know and identify the main strategic

challenges and objectives associated with the implementation of the project; 2) know and identify the relevant local actors to achieve the project's strategic objectives; 4) identify the necessary resources and obstacles to project implementation; 5) identify potential project partners; 6) formulate strategic recommendations that contribute to the implementation and success of the project. To respond to these objectives, semi-structured interviews were carried out with six local stakeholders organized according to the typology identified in table 1.

Table 1: Stakeholder Typology

Typology	Stakeholders Description
Regional Development Coordination	Alentejo Regional Coordination and Development Commission
Regional Tourism Entity	Alentejo and Ribatejo Tourism
Local Administration	Moura City Council
	Safara e Santo Aleixo da Restauração Parish Council
Associations	Association for the Development of Moura Municipality
	Social and Parish Center of Santo Aleixo da Restauração

Source: Author's data

The interviewees were selected intentionally considering the following criteria: 1) regional entities, with competencies in the area of regional development and tourism; 2) Local public administration entities (local authorities); Private sector associative entities with skills in the area of local development. In this sense, six stakeholders were involved in the study: the Alentejo and Ribatejo Regional Coordination and Development Commission; Alentejo and Ribatejo Tourism; the Moura City Council; the Parish Council of Safara and Santo Aleixo da Restauração; the Social and Parish Center of Santo Aleixo da Restauração; and the Association for the Development of the Municipality of Moura.

The interviews followed a script, constructed based on literature (Nunkoo, 2017; Della Corte et al., 2018; Perkins et al., 2020; Souza & Chiodi, 2023). The script was organized into four thematic axes with a total of 7 questions. The first thematic axis intended to characterize the entity. The second focused on questions about the strategic challenges and objectives associated with the implementation of a tourism enterprise in rural areas via the Glamping option. In the third axis, data was obtained on the necessary resources and obstacles to implementing the project. The fourth axis aimed to ask about potential project partners; The fifth and final block contained questions about the main challenges and key success factors of the project. The interviews were carried out in person and through online platforms, lasting between 40 minutes and 1 hour. All interviewees were informed of the purpose of the interview and authorized its recording. Subsequently, the interviews were recorded and transcribed in full. Its content was subject to categorical analysis, organized into three phases: 1) pre-analysis, 2) exploration of the material; 3) treatment of results, inference and interpretation (Bardin, 2016). In an initial phase, the content extracted from the interviews was organized and systematized, and then the analysis itself was operationalized. The analysis was organized based on the dimensions and categories identified in the literature and in the interviews based on new themes that emerged as patterns of responses from the interviewees.

5. Results

From the interviews, it was possible to identify the main challenges and strategic objectives associated with the implementation and sustainability of the Monte of Castanheiro – Country Club & Glamping project, as well as the necessary resources, obstacles and potential partners relevant to establishing alliances. Three strategic challenges were identified—Sustainable Tourism Development (D1); Economic-Social Valorization of the Territory and the Village (D2); Support and incentive policies for Rural Tourism and Glamping (D3), and sixteen associated objectives, namely: Contribute to the development of tourism in Santo Aleixo da Restauração so that it occurs at all times of the year and not just during festive seasons (O1); Contribute to more sustained tourism, with a view to preserving and conserving all natural and cultural heritage of the village of Santo Aleixo da Restauração and the surrounding territory (O2); Valuing and promoting local heritage and its endogenous resources (O3); Allow potential clients to enjoy various types of tourism, such as cultural, gastronomic, ethnic, nature or ecotourism (O4); Provide potential clients with a distinct, striking and differentiating travel and accommodation experience (O5); Promote sustainable

tourism and natural and cultural heritage, both at local and regional, and national and international levels (O6); Attract tourists with different profiles, from different social and cultural contexts, with a view to boosting the village and region (O7); Promote interaction between tourists and the local community (O8); Stimulate the supply of qualifications/training in the area of sustainable tourism (O9); Create new jobs (O10); Contribute to the establishment and attraction of the young population (of working age) in the village and the territory (O11); Invest in the region's human potential (O12); Contribute to boosting the local economy (O13); Encourage local entities to support investment in tourist activities in the village and territory (O14); Capture public investment for the development of tourism projects in rural areas (O15); Encourage the de-bureaucratization of licensing processes (O16). The objectives considered by the interviewees to be the most relevant are, in descending order: Providing potential customers with a distinct, striking and differentiating travel and accommodation experience; Allow potential clients to enjoy various types of tourism, such as cultural, gastronomic, ethnic, nature or ecotourism; Create new jobs; Contribute to the establishment and attraction of the young population (of working age) in the village and the territory; Contribute to more sustainable tourism, with a view to preserving and conserving all natural and cultural heritage of the village of Santo Aleixo da Restauração and the surrounding territory; Stimulate the supply of qualifications/training in the area of sustainable tourism. Therefore, the objectives that generated the most controversy among interviewees are linked to the second and third challenges - the Economic-Social Valorization of the Territory and the Village and the Policies to support and encourage Rural Tourism and Glamping, respectively. Among the most controversial objectives, the following stand out: Attracting tourists with different profiles, coming from different social and cultural contexts, with a view to boosting the village and region (O7); Contribute to boosting the local economy (O13); Capture public investment for the development of tourism enterprises in rural areas (O15); Encourage the reduction of bureaucracy in licensing processes (O16). The majority of actors stated that, in order to achieve the objectives, financial and human resources are needed, through public financing to support the implementation of project actions and potential services that may emerge during its implementation, attracting and attracting younger people and their training using specialized professional training. Investment in material resources and the creation of partnerships and alliances between local entities also appear as fundamental resources for project implementation. The following obstacles were highlighted: the lack of an economic-financial feasibility study for the project; the proximity to protected areas, which may make it impossible to carry out some of your activities; the reduced supply of restaurant and local accommodation services in the village and in Moura; bureaucracy in terms of documentation required within the licensing processes for tourist developments; carrying out outdoor activities may be restricted during the winter season; The project is aimed at an upper-class customer segment and profile, which will imply a strong investment in financial and material resources to guarantee a quality and excellent service.

6. Discussion

The results of the study confirmed the importance of a tourist development, via Glamping, as an added value for the local development of this village, by integrating the natural and cultural elements that make up the heritage and local identity. Furthermore, from the perspective of the interviewed stakeholders, this type of tourist activity, by bringing together the different types and types of tourism (natural tourism, cultural tourism, wine tourism, hunting tourism, food tourism, rural tourism), contributes favorably to attracting new audiences and, consequently, to boosting the local economy (Barros, 2009; Rosalina et al., 2021; Lourdes, 2023; Marques, 2023; Souza & Chiodi, 2023). Similar to other research, this study highlighted the importance of tourism for the diversification of the economy and investment in tourist enterprises with value propositions for the village, with a view to boosting the revitalization of rural areas (Barros, 2009; Kalantaridis, 2010; Lang & Novy, 2014; Müller & Korsgaard, 2018; Rosalina et al., 2021; Lourdes, 2023; Marques, 2023; Souza & Chiodi, 2023). The literature highlights that the potential of tourism is based on the natural and cultural resources incorporated into the location. In this sense, for the majority of interviewees, as pointed out by Kibler, Kautonen and Fink (2014), Nunkoo (2017), Della

Corte et al. (2018), Perkins et al. (2020), Souza and Chiodi (2023), for development to occur in rural spaces, the entrepreneur is the fundamental actor as a guide for the venture. However, to achieve this, the entrepreneur must seek to establish a high level of incorporation of resources, local integration and connection between contexts. Respondents agreed that physical resources are fundamental. As an example of this type of resources, natural resources and raw materials used in the Glamping typology were identified. Resources related to human capital as a source of business, services, products, knowledge and experience were also identified as fundamental resources for the development of a business. To increase local collective human capital, especially during high seasons or when specific training is required, which is limited in the village and municipality of Moura, project promoters must resort to external services (for example, hiring people) and products from other local companies (Müller & Korsgaard, 2018). The social resource is considered by the stakeholders interviewed as a critical element, where the community must be used as a resource through participation and collaboration, especially in more isolated and remote spaces, such as this village (Müller & Korsgaard, 2018). The interviewees also valued intangible resources when combined with physical resources and should be used to promote the enterprise. Likewise, financial resources were highlighted as necessary sources for starting and expanding the venture, preventing entrepreneurs from resorting to risk capital (Müller & Korsgaard, 2018). The results of the study reiterate what other empirical investigations have pointed out about the importance of investing in a strong incorporation of resources, as they interfere in decisions about the activities of the tourism enterprise project (Jack & Anderson, 2002; Kibler, Kautonen & Fink, 2014; Müller & Korsgaard, 2018). Being involved in local context is a precondition for entrepreneurial activity. However, as the authors Jack and Anderson (2002) warn, there may be constraints to imagination and creativity depending on the practices and norms of the local and national context. Another aspect highlighted by interviewees is related to the need for entrepreneurs to create links between other activities and ventures, as well as to use strategic resources to attract potential customers, partners and to promote products and services. As argued by Kalantaridis (2010), Lang and Novy (2014), Müller and Korsgaard (2018), these connections create new opportunities for entrepreneurs and strengthen their local integration. The main challenges highlighted by the interviewees are related to the institutional support of the local authority and local associations, as well as greater local integration and coordination between enterprises (Müller & Korsgaard, 2018; Souza & Chiodi, 2023).

7. Conclusions

The results of the study made it possible to respond favorably to the research question formulated, that is, the investment in enriching the tourist accommodation offer, particularly via the Glamping option, constitutes an added value for the local development of Santo Aleixo da Restauração. However, the success of this type of tourism enterprise depends on the degree of interaction and collaboration in networks between the different tourism stakeholders. The results of the study allowed us to conclude that: the main alliances are structured around the objectives “contribute to more sustainable tourism, with a view to preserving and conserving all natural and cultural heritage of the village of Santo Aleixo da Restauração and the surrounding territory” and “create new jobs”, with strong mobilization of the actors that make up group 1 (Moura City Council; Social and Parish Center of Santo Aleixo da Restauração and CCDR Alentejo and Ribatejo). On the contrary, the objectives “Stimulate the reduction of bureaucracy in licensing processes”, “Attract tourists with different profiles, from different social and cultural contexts, with a view to boosting the village and region” and “contribute to boosting the local economy”, generated some disagreement between the following stakeholders: Development Association of the Municipality of Moura; the Parish Council of Safara and Santo Aleixo da Restauração and Tourism of Alentejo and Ribatejo. Based on the observation of some constraints, especially where trends that put the project's economic and social viability at risk intersect with the attraction of financial and human resources (attracting financing and qualified people), strategic recommendations were formulated for implementation and sustainability of a rural tourism project in the village of Santo Aleixo da Restauração, namely: 1) prepare an

economic-financial feasibility study of the project; 2) define measures to attract qualified people to join work teams; 3) define the customer profile; 4) analyze investment options in material resources; 5) obtain and analyze the information necessary for the licensing process of tourism enterprises; 6) clarify the options regarding the actions and activities to be promoted, in order to assess whether they are in line with the preservation of protected spaces/areas; 7) investigate and establish possible and desirable synergies, that is, promote the creation of partnerships and alliances between local and regional entities.

It can be concluded that regional power and local power are fundamental to creating favorable conditions for the implementation of the Project, with responsibility in terms of support and support for the agents of this project. Furthermore, they are, par excellence, promoters of the use of endogenous resources for the village's differentiation and sustainable development. The creation of cooperation networks, especially between local entities, from the public and private sectors, are equally fundamental for the development of this type of tourist enterprise. In this sense, municipalities and local associations can be the main drivers of the Monte of Castanheiro Project – Country Club & Glamping. It is therefore essential to stimulate and establish networks of cooperation and partnership with local actors identified as key to implementing the project (Nunkoo, 2017; Della Corte et al., 2018; Perkins et al., 2020; Souza & Chiodi, 2023).

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