DETERMINANTS OF THE EXPENDITURE OF TOURIST DEMAND IN COASTAL DESTINATIONS

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ABSTRACT

The aim of this work is to analyze the determinants of tourist expenditure in Monte Hermoso, a destination located in the southwest of the province of Buenos Aires, Argentina. Tourist surveys were administered during the austral summer (January-February) and considered as primary information. Socioeconomic and trip-related variables were selected to explain the determinants of the average total expenditure of tourists in this destination. The Ordinary Least Squares (OLS) method was applied. From the results obtained, it was determined that the level of income, origin, group size, and type of accommodation are the regressors that best demonstrate the spending behavior of the destination's domestic demand. Therefore, it is possible to identify the most attractive demand segments that contribute to improving competitiveness and increasing the rate of return of the destination.

INTRODUCTION

Clearly shown by the statistics and statements of the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO), the consolidation of tourism as an economic sector

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that equals or even exceeds other sectors such as oil or automotive industry is considered as a fact at global scale. Between 2009 and 2019, there was not only an increase in tourists' number that make up international flows, but also an increase in income from international tourism; the latter is one of the main indicators of growth in the activity (UNWTO, 2019). Income is a measure of the economic impact of tourism upon destinations. The Word Travel & Council Tourism - WTTC (2020a) established that in 2019 the activity contributed to 10.3% of global GDP, which represented 6.8% of total exports and 28.3% of global services exports. In addition, capital investment exceeded US $ 900 billion, i.e., 4.3% of total investment.

In Latin America, tourism represents 8.8% of regional GDP and during 2019, it represented 9.2% of the national GDP in Argentina (WTTC, 2020a, 2020b). According to the report of the National Ministry of Finance of Argentina (2019), tourism is the fourth export complex in the country and stands out for its contribution to Argentina's federal growth. Although most of the international arrivals are concentrated at Ministro Pistarini International Airport (Ezeiza), 94% of tourist expenditure takes place outside autonomous city of Buenos Aires and Buenos Aires's Metropolitan Area. This shows that tourism is a consumption activity whose measurement through expenditure is essential (Park et al., 2019).

The growth of this sector at all territorial scales is based on the permanent mobility of people for tourism purposes, which is favored by globalization and the technological development that this phenomenon brings about. This presents a new model of global tourism that, in terms of demand, is characterized by its expansion towards intra and interregional destinations and the convergence of different tastes, preferences, and lifestyles that shape new market segments. Consequently, more flexible and adaptable forms of production are implemented (Fraiz Brea, 2015; Garcia Pascual, 2017). Changes in demand give rise to the emergence of the postmodern tourist who is differentiated by ones' behavior and consumption patterns (Noguera Tur et al., 2015). This tourist coexists with other tourist profiles, which implies that the destination should be aware of these segments and their contributions to the different tourism products it offers.

Sun and sand destinations, traditionally associated with a Fordist production model and mass tourism, are not exempt from the processes of change in tourist demand. This is added to the inconveniences of seasonality and modernizing (in the case of mature destinations), as well as to the impacts of crises and changes in the environment where they are

located. Therefore, the interest in empirical knowledge of tourist consumption using expenditure and its components as proxy variables is widespread. These data contribute to the definition of dynamization and positioning strategies according to the scenario of change where tourist destinations are found.

Studies focused on such variables (consumption and expenditure) have been conducted both at micro (Wu et al., 2013; Brida & Scuderi, 2013; Vasco et al., 2014; Aguiló et al., 2017; D'Urso et al., 2020) and macro level (Eugenio-Martin & Campos-Soria, 2014; Lin et al., 2015; Mehran & Olya, 2018; Desfrancois & Pastás Gutierrez, 2019). Some authors (Abbruzzo et al., 2014; Disegna & Osti, 2016; Smolčić Jurdana & Soldić Frleta, 2017) agree that there is a smaller number of analyzes on determinants of tourism expenditure at individual level, although the recent review of literature unveils many studies in which the main unit of analysis is the subjects. However, there is a greater number of studies that address the determinants of spending in destinations with international demand rather than in those with domestic tourist demand. It is the case of sun and sand destinations in the Mediterranean and European, Asian, and North American destinations associated with other types of tourism. Likewise, in the mid-latitudes of the southern hemisphere, there are studies focused on the international demand of Peru, Colombia, Ecuador, and Uruguay, however, there is no analysis on domestic demand. Therefore, the following questions arise: *What are the determinants in coastal destinations where the main demand results from domestic tourism? Does the relationship between expenditure and the explanatory variables go in the same direction? What are the advantages of identifying the determinants of expenditure for a tourism destination and its marketing organizations?*

Monte Hermoso is a consolidated sun and sand destination located in the southwest of the province of Buenos Aires (SW Buenos Aires). Its main economic activity is tourism, and it is the fastest-growing and fastest-expanding destination in SW of Buenos Aires (Vaquero et al., 2007). The Secretariat of Tourism has been conducting surveys among tourists during the austral summer (January and February) for over a decade now so that it is possible to know the demand for the destination from a descriptive point of view (definition of the tourist profile and consumption habits). However, there is a lack of explanatory and correlational research on expenditure at the destination. Therefore, the objective of this paper is *to analyze the determinants of expenditure by tourists in Monte Hermoso during the 2020 summer season*.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Demand and Tourist Consumption

The concept of demand is directly associated with a price-quantity relationship since the individuals demand goods or services when they desire them and have the resources to obtain them. In the field of tourism, demand is understood as the flow of people who visit a destination or wish to do so for not more than one year and not less than 24 hours. Based on this definition, the demand is classified as effective or latent. The first group includes the total number of people who participate in tourist activities, while the second one refers to those who wish to participate in tourism but are unable to do so due to personal reasons (potential latent demand) or to those related to the destination (deferred latent demand) (Panosso Netto & Lohmann, 2012). In this article, an analysis of effective demand is conducted since it is a variable that can be quantified based on accurate data.

At the same time, tourist demand may appear to be a simple concept, but it is far from being so due to the multiple approaches and issues that may arise. For example, there are different studies based on macro and micro contexts (Ruiz Romero de la Cruz et al., 2020), as well as on purely economic, motivational, or psychosocial perspectives. Likewise, some other studies base their analysis according to the tourism types, while others do not address these differences. One of the aspects that complicates the approach to demand is the underlying act of consumption. Tourism consumption is not the result of economic determinism because it is related to cultural and behavioral factors that respond to different socio-cultural, economic, and political contexts. From this perspective, tourism is not restricted to travel from a point of origin to a destination, but rather regards people looking for experiences and realities different from those of their daily lives. This reflects a social attitude of "choice" within a relatively defined market based on the interests of the supply (Guzmán Hernández et al., 2009).

In line with the complexity of demand and consumption, Woodside and Dubelaar (2002) propose a conceptual and empirical framework about tourism consumption systems (TCSs). A TCS is defined as "(…) the set of related travel thoughts, decisions, and behaviors by a discretionary traveler prior to, during, and following a trip" (Woodside & Dubelaar, 2002: 120). According to this theory, thoughts, decisions, and behaviors are linked to other thoughts and decisions related to other activities. This shows the interest in understanding these patterns in the consumption of goods and services which are directly and indirectly related to tourism. Therefore, it is

possible to broaden the spectrum of analysis in relation to the decisions made and the actions carried out by the tourist, instead of focusing exclusively on the reasons for choosing the destination. The study of the tourist by means of the TCSs helps to obtain a more specific definition of the profile by market segment, socio demographic features, trip planning among other issues.

In the study of demand, it is essential to consider the determining factors. Regalado Aragón (2013) establishes four economic factors that influence the decision to consume a tourist product: a) the prices of tourist services, b) the prices of other goods consumed by tourists, c) the level of discretionary income, and d) the real exchange rate (for international tourism). For their part, González Alatorre and Conde Pérez (2011) expand that vision and establish four groups of factors: a) economic, they refer to the same aspects mentioned by Regalado Aragón (2013); b) related to the demanding subjects: motivations, tastes, and preferences (push factors) (Da Silva Añaña et al., 2017), geographic proximity and demographic and socio-cultural features of the visitors. The third group of factors, c) the marketing system that includes the promotion of the destination; and finally, d) customer satisfaction, an extremely complex dimension given its subjective nature. In sum, these determinants can be included in the function of tourist demand, i.e. the "quantity demanded" depends on a set of factors that usually include: the price of the service, the income level, the price of other goods and services, tastes and preferences, and the size of the market (Mochón Morcillo & Becker, 2008).

Tourism Expenditure: A Strategic Variable

Like the determinants of demand, tourism spending is a widely developed topic in literature. It is one of the main indicators when analyzing consumption and is often used as a proxy variable to estimate effective demand. Total tourist spending is the sum of expenditures made by the tourist for consumption while traveling between the region of origin and the destination, and *in situ*.

The payment for a tourist service gives rise to economic effects and investments that multiply income and generate income and consumption (Narváez & Fernández, 2010). Thus, the complexity in the analysis of spending is mainly due to its implications for the destination. On the one hand, it is necessary to identify the space where the expenditure is made (origin or destination) to determine the real impact of tourism in each territory (Alegre Martín et al., 2003). On the other hand, it is necessary to

differentiate between the number of tourist arrivals and the expenditure made (Noguera Tur et al., 2015). The profitability obtained by tourism is not necessarily proportional to the linear growth of visitors but depends on i) the effective spending capacity of tourists at the destination, ii) the components into which it is broken down, and iii) the occupancy rate of the tourist supply.

According to Aguiló et al. (2017) destinations deal a dilemma about increasing spending, expanding the tourist plant or increasing prices and improving the quality of services. From the perspective of profitability, one tourist with a certain level of expenditure is preferred to two tourists with half the spending. Under this presumption, the same level of benefits can be achieved with a high daily per capita expenditure and a low volume of tourists or, alternatively, with a high volume of tourists and a low level of daily per capita expenditure. In short, from a macro perspective, the analysis of tourism expenditure allows: i) to measure the multiplier effect that the activity contributes to the economy as a whole, ii) to identify how income is distributed along the value chain and therefore its contribution to local and regional growth (Noguera Tur et al., 2015), iii) to assess the return of tourist activity in a destination, and iv) to study the evolution of demand in a given period (Nicolau & Mas-Ruiz, 2007; Narváez & Fernández, 2010; Varisco, 2018). Accordingly, strategies can be planned to improve the positioning of the destination, gain the target public, segment the market, and design public policies (Park et al., 2019).

From a micro perspective, it is important to measure spending by considering tourists as the unit of analysis. The study of total tourism expenditure by group, total individual expenditure and daily expenditure per capita, helps to understand spending patterns and consumption behavior (García-Sánchez et al., 2013; Disegna & Osti, 2016). On this scale of analysis, different authors have concluded that tourism is a normal good, i.e., income elasticity is positive, as income increases, so does the demand for tourism (Nicolau & Mas-Ruiz, 2007; Hung et al., 2013, Brida & Scuderi, 2013; D'Urso et al., 2020).

The components of tourist expenditure are usually broken down into the following categories: accommodation, food and beverages, transportation, shopping, excursions, and entertainment (Marcussen, 2011; Smolčić & Soldić Freleta, 2016). However, in respect of their determinants, multiple variables are involved since they do not have a universal definition. This is because the results obtained in different applied studies are not always associated. For instance, in the analysis conducted by

Nicolau and Mas-Ruiz (2007), age is not a significant factor in explaining expenditure by Spaniards during their vacations, while Jang et al. (2004) found that it was for Japanese tourists, who spent more on travel as they get aged. In turn, Kruger et al. (2010) showed that this variable is one of the most significant. In relation to the length of stay, different results have also been obtained. Nicolau and Mas-Ruiz (2007) and Aguiló et al. (2017) found that its length has positive effects on tourism expenditure, while Smolčić Jurdana and Soldić Frleta (2016) determined that the effect is negative. In contrast, Park et al. (2019) identified that this explanatory variable is not significant.

Despite the distinctive features and heterogeneity of the empirical findings, there is a common denominator in the determinants selected in most of the studies on this issue. Nicolau and Mas-Ruiz (2007) group the explanatory variables of spending into three categories: i) individual travel-related characteristics, ii) personal restrictions, and iii) socio-demographic characteristics. On their part, Mudarra-Fernández et al. (2019) identify four groups of factors that affect tourism expenditure: i) socioeconomic variables, ii) variables related to the trip characteristics, iii) variables associated with the destination, and iv) psychological variables. Based on these two proposals Figure 1 disaggregates the corresponding explanatory variables.
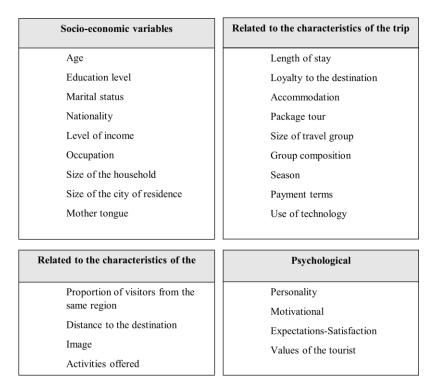
Socio-economic variables	Related to the characteristics of the trip
Age	Length of stay
Education level	Loyalty to the destination
Marital status	Accommodation
Nationality	Package tour
Level of income	Size of travel group
Occupation	Group composition
Size of the household	Season
Size of the city of residence	Payment terms
Mother tongue	Use of technology

Related to the characteristics of the	Psychological
Proportion of visitors from the same region	Personality
Distance to the destination	Motivational
Image	Expectations-Satisfaction
Activities offered	Values of the tourist

Figure 1. *Determinants of tourist expenditure grouped by main categories of analysis*

According to the review by Mudarra-Fernández et al. (2019) the main explanatory variables of expenditure for most tourism typologies are: within the group i) educational level, income, nationality, and occupation. With respect to category ii), length of stay and size of the group are directly and positively related, while loyalty to the destination expresses an inverse relationship to spending. In the group iii), the variables image, distance to the destination, and proportion of people from the same region stand out, although, unlike the previous cases, the degree of analysis is comparatively lower and, consequently, there is less certainty about its effect on tourism expenditure. Within the last group iv) the most studied variable is motivation that has a positive effect on the dependent variable.

From this literature review, assumptions arise about the relationship of the determinants with respect to tourism expenditure. Regarding to this, the hypotheses are established for each of the four groups defined above with respect to Monte Hermoso (Table 1).

Table 1. *Hypotheses about the determinants of tourism expenditure in Monte Hermoso*

Group	Hypotheses
(i)	H_1: Monte Hermoso's tourists with over ARS 32,000 income express a direct relationship with respect to total expenditure.
	H_2: The relationship with respect to total expenditure by Monte Hermoso's tourist is independent from the category of occupancy.
(ii)	H_3: Tourists who are on vacation in the destination for more than 15 days spend more than those with shorter stays.
(iii)	H_4: Tourists that come from cities more than 300 km from the destination, spend more than those from the nearby region.
(iv)	H_5: Tourists who choose Monte Hermoso for the safety spend more than those who choose it for its attractions.

Most of the studies focused on the analysis of individual consumption are based on econometric models which, according to the review by Abbruzzo et al. (2014) are classified into two groups. On the one hand, there are studies based on the representation of the Engel curve. They seek to show the level of expenditure based on socio-demographic, travel-related, psychographic, and budget restriction variables. For this purpose, the most widely used methods are Ordinary Least Squares (OLS), although other methods have also been used to answer specific estimation issues. Another group of studies is based on random utility models in which the attributes that affect the probability that a subject will consume tourism goods when faced with the likelihood of choosing between tourism and non-tourism goods and services are determined. In these cases, logistic regression methods are usually used.

STUDY AREA

Monte Hermoso is a seaside destination located in SW Buenos Aires (38° 59′ S; 61° 15′ W) as administrative seat of the homonymous district is the main urban nucleus. Arranged longitudinally parallel to the coast, the urban area of the town covers 186 ha. The city has a general direction E-W and extends for a length of 32 km between Punta Sauce (14 km from the destination) and Punta Pehuen Co.

The extension of the beach and its natural characteristics have allowed its transformation from a resource to a to a tourist attraction of hierarchy, which makes the destination one of the main stay centers in the Buenos Aires SW (Vaquero et al., 2007). Two distinguishing features of this destination are: the absence of shadow cones due to the E-W direction of the coast having both sunrises and sunsets over the sea, and the water temperature, 5 °C warmer than other coastal destinations on the Atlantic coast of Buenos Aires (Del Pozo & Bróndolo, 2003; Huamantinco, 2012).

Tourism is the main economic activity of Monte Hermoso, its peak demand is during the months of January and February (austral summer). In relation to this, Caruso (2019) establishes the difference between the stable population of the town and its summer population. According to her projection for 2019, the permanent population of Monte Hermoso was 7,665 habitants, while in the summer season it is estimated that it amounted to 74,000 people, which represents a population increase of over 700% concentrated in only two months. In recent years, in order to mitigate the marked seasonal pattern, the destination has diversified its offer from sports tourism. Finally, residential tourism is the main type for the implementation of the activity, which implies that tourist flows are represented by family units that stay in second homes for long periods of time, in this case over 30 consecutive days.

METHODOLOGY

Data base

The database used in this article includes the most relevant characteristics of the tourists who vacationed in Monte Hermoso during the 2020 summer season. This primary information was obtained in the field between January and February 2020 through targeted surveys aimed at this population. Respondents were selected by simple random sampling. The sample size was determined in 1,473 individuals with a confidence level of 95% and 5%

error. However, prior to the multi-varied analysis, the records with incomplete information were removed, so the database was reduced to 1,117 valid questionnaires.

The questionnaire was divided into two sections. The first part corresponds to the survey of the characteristics of the demand that help to build the profile in greater detail. Among the variables included in this section are the following: gender of the respondent, number of people per group, type of group, number of people by age range, place of origin, length of stay, educational level, occupation, type of accommodation, ways of booking accommodation services, conveyance used, monthly income, total tourist expenditure, reason for choosing the destination, attractions visited, and price level perception. The second part of the questionnaire includes an evaluation grid to determine the level of satisfaction with respect to different variables related to the quality of the destination's services and attention received. For the purposes of this study, the variables of the first section were used.

Variables and model

The dependent variable in this study is the total tourist expenditure reported by the respondents. It is expressed in national currency, i.e., the Argentine peso ($ ARS). The Kolmogorov-Smirnov normality test showed that the variable does not have a normal distribution, so the natural logarithm (ln) of total tourist expenditure (log-lin model) was used. In addition, as Thrane (2014) points out, the logarithmic transformation of expenditure contributes to mitigating heteroscedasticity and reducing the influence of outliers, thus leading to a better model fit. The Ordinary Least Squares (OLS) method was applied to explain the determinants of total expenditure, because the dependent variable is continuous and responds to the cross-sectional nature of the data base.

The least squares regression method aims to generate the function that best fits the general trend of the data and is the simplest to understand a complex phenomenon (Burton, 2020). For this reason, in this case the method was used to find out which are the main variables that explain the expenditure behavior of Monte Hermoso's tourists. The OLS is a useful technique when the parameters are unknown and the relationships between the dependent variable and the regressors are hypotheses that requires to be tested. The method consists of minimizing the sum of the squared residuals, that is the differences between observed and expected values according to the results of the model (Dismuke & Lindrooth, 2006).

Among its main advantages it can mention i) it is objective, ii) it is reproducible as provides the same equation no matter who performs the analysis, and iii) allows to get a probabilistic estimate of the equation representing experimental data (Burton, 2020). To this end, the Statistical Package for the Social Science (SPSS) software (version 23.0) was used. The regression model is presented in equation 1.

$$Ln\ Y_i = \beta_0 + \sum \beta_j\ X_{ij} + \varepsilon_i \quad [equation\ 1]$$

Where Ln Y_i is the natural logarithm of the total tourist expenditure made by the i-th observation; β_0 is the intercept or ordinate to the origin; β_j is the coefficient associated with the j-th regressors; X_{ij} j-th regressors associated with the i-th observation and ε_i is the random error.

According to the reference authors cited in section 2, the independent variables or regressors are grouped into two categories: socioeconomic and travel-related (Table 2). Most of the explanatory variables are categorical, so they were transformed into binary variables to be included in the model. Due to the number of categories contained in the categorical variables, the reference variables are family (group composition); primary (educational level); student (occupation); $ 16,000 to $ 24,000 (household income); second home (type of accommodation).

Table 2. *Independent variables*

Independent variables	Descriptions
Socio economic	
Gender (dummy variable)	1 = male; 0 = female
Income (dummy variable)	
$ 32,000 to 48,000	1 = monthly income corresponds to the range; 0 =
$ 48,000 to 64,000	otherwise.
$ 64,000 to 80,000	
$ > 80,000	
Educational level (dummy variable)	
Secondary	1 = if high school is completed; 0 = otherwise.
Tertiary	1 = if holds tertiary degree; 0 = otherwise.
University	1 = if holds a university degree; 0 = otherwise.
Occupation (dummy variable)	
Professional	1 = if is a professional; 0 = otherwise.
Public employee	1 = if is a public employee; 0 = otherwise.
Private employee	1 = if is a private employee; 0 = otherwise
Retiree	1 = if is a retiree; 0 = otherwise
Origin (dummy variable)	
Bahía Blanca	1= if is from Bahía Blanca; 0 = otherwise.
Southwest of Buenos Aires province	1= if is from Southwest of Buenos Aires province; 0= otherwise

Related to the trip	
Travel party size	Number of members of the group.
Children	Number of children in the group.
Length of stay	Number of the days at the destination.
Type of accommodation (dummy variable)	
Hotel	1 = if stay at a hotel; 0 = otherwise.
Rental housing	1 = if stay at rental housing; 0 = otherwise.
Cottage	1 = if stay at cottage; 0= otherwise.
Apart hotel	1 = if stay at apart hotel; 0 = otherwise.
Camping	1 = if stay at camping; 0 = otherwise.
Motivation	
Rest and quiet	1 = choose MH for rest and quiet; 0 = otherwise.
Second house	1 = choose MH because has a house; 0 = otherwise.
Safety	1 = choose MH because its safety; 0 = otherwise.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Characteristics of the tourist demand

The demand in Monte Hermoso (Table 3) is mainly made up of families (72%). In terms of age, the 26 to 55 age group is the most representative (44%), followed by minors (0 to 18 years old) who represent 34%, which is conclusive with the most frequent type of group. The level of education of those surveyed is high with 70% having completed their higher studies (Tertiary and/or University) and 29% completed secondary studies. Regarding to occupation, tourists are mostly in the private employee (32%) and professional (27%) categories. The sea and the beach, as well as tranquility and proximity are the key features in the choice of the destination. 25% of the sample comes from the city of Bahía Blanca, maintaining its status as the most relevant issuing center, although losing seven percentage points compared to the previous year (Rodriguez et al., 2019). The Patagonia region contributes 24% of tourists, doubling its percentage share compared to the 2019 summer season.

The average stay was 10 days, and the most frequent type of accommodation was rental housing (60%). Accommodation was booked through a real estate agency (55%) and to a lesser extent privately (35%) or through the Internet (10%). The average total expenditure by tourists was $ 50,460.90, which in US dollars is equivalent to US $ 783.80 according to the official exchange rate of March 2020 (Central Bank of the Argentine Republic, 2020). The average daily expense was $ 5,041.53 (US $ 78.30). In sum, it can be stated that the characteristics of the demand for the 2020 summer season are not far from the results obtained for the 2019 season (Rodriguez et al., 2019).

Table 3. *Summary of data*

Variable	Percentage (%)	Variable	Mean	St. deviation
Gender		Length of stay (days)	10	8.9
Male	54			
Female	46			
Type of group		Group size	5	35424.8
Couple	17.2			
Family	72.3			
Excursionist	0.0			
Day tripper	7.7			
Single person	2.8			
Educational level		Total expenditure ($ ARS)	50.600	
Primary	1			
Secondary	28.8			
Tertiary	23.6			
University	45.8			
Occupation				
Professional	26.8			
Public employee	9.6			
Private employee	31.8			
Retiree	7.7			
Student	1.6			
Other occupation	20.5			
Origin				
Bahía Blanca	24.7			
SW of Buenos Aires province	12.1			
Buenos Aires province and Autonomous city of Buenos Aires	17.6			
Patagonia region	24			
Norte region	1			
Litoral region	4			
Cuyo region	10.6			
Córdoba region	6			
Type of accommodation				
Hotel	10.8			
Rental housing	60			
Second home	21			
Cottage	1.2			
Apart hotel	3.1			
Camping	3.4			
Transportation				
Car	95			
Bus	3.5			
Minibus	1.2			
Monthly household income [2]				
≤ $16,000	0			
$16,000 a $32,000	2			
$32,000 a $48,000	10			
$48,000 a 64,000	26			
$64,000 a $80,000	39			
≥ $80,000	24			

[2] The data on average monthly income per household expressed in U.S. dollars (according to the bilateral exchange rate as of March 2020) represent the following ranges: ≤ 245 (U$S); 245 to 491 (U$S); 491 to 736 (U$S); 736 to 982 (U$S); 982 to 1,227 (U$S) and ≥1,227 (U$S).

Components of tourism expenditure

The questionnaire administered to tourists, in addition to inquiring about the total expenditure made during their stay at the destination, also asks about the percentage of the total budget allocated to five main components: accommodation, food and beverages, entertainment, excursions, and shopping. The transportation component is excluded from the analysis as it is an expense usually incurred in the city of origin, so it has no impact on the destination. Figure 2 shows the composition of expenditure for the 2020 season.

Figure 2. *Composition of tourist expenditure in Monte Hermoso during 2020 summer season*

According to the information summarized in Figure 2, it can be observed that 75% of the total expenditure is allocated to the accommodation and food and beverages. This is related to the structure of the tourism supply in Monte Hermoso, since they are the fastest growing services while entertainment, although the offer is varied, does not represent a substantial component in the tourists' budget (8% in the season). Shopping accounts for 17% of total tourist expenditure and excursions for only 1%. The latter is since the beach is the main offer of the destination and the attractions that complement it can be visited individually. In addition, there is no receptive tourism agency in the town that markets excursions.

Determinants of tourism expenditure

Table 4 shows the results obtained from the OLS regression method, taking as the dependent variable the ln of total tourism expenditure per group. According to the estimation, the key explanatory variables are income level, origin, group size and type of accommodation chosen.

Table 4. *Basic model for total expenditure. Dependent variable: total expenditure per group (ln)*

Variables	Coefficients (β)	t	Confidence interval for β (95%)	
			Lower limit	Upper limit
Constant (β_0)	9.032	106.542	8.865	9.198
Socio-economic				
Gender	0.083*	2.769	.024	.142
Income (*ref. $16,000 to $32,000*)				
Between $32,000 and 48,000(ARS)	.071	1.067	-.060	.200
Between $ 48,000 and 64,000 (ARS)	.150*	2.829	.046	.254
Between $ 64,000 and 80,000 (ARS)	.230**	4.500	.130	.330
Over $ 80,000 (ARS)	.345**	6.059	.232	.454
Occupation (*ref. student*)				
Professional	.049	.259	-.037	.134
Public employee	-.042	.455	-.152	.070
Private employee	-.052	.218	-.134	.029
Retiree	-.043	.521	-.175	.088
Origin (*ref. rest of the country*)				
Bahía Blanca	-.236**	-5.770	-.316	-.155
Southwest of Buenos Aires	-.280**	-5.946	-.374	-.189
Related to the trip				
Travel party size	.058**	5.749	.038	.078
N° of children per group	.043*	2.453	.009	.078
Length of stay	.036**	17.246	.032	.040
Type of accommodation (*ref. second home*)				
Hotel	.754**	10.838	.618	.891
Rental housing	.954**	16.489	.840	1.067
Apart hotel	1.238**	11.944	1.035	1.441
Cottage	.988**	7.267	.721	1.254
Camping	.450*	4.467	.252	.647
Type of group (*ref. family*)				
Couple	-.096*	.521	-.186	-.005
Friends	.033	.218	-.099	.163
Single person	-.324*	-3.351	-.516	-.140
Motivation (*ref. sea, beach, and weather*)				
Rest and quiet	.094*	3.018	.033	.155
Safety	.054	1.200	-.030	.138
Has a second home	.065	.947	-.071	.202

Notes: * p value < 0.05. ** p value < 0.001. The model explains 61.3% of the variance (R^2) of the dependent variable. According to the value obtained for the Durbin-Watson statistic (1.777), the assumption of independent errors is fulfilled.

In relation to socioeconomic variables, it is evident that gender has a significant influence on spending. Men spend on average 15.8% more than women. Contradictory and inconclusive evidence has been found in the literature. For example, the studies by M. Saayman and A. Saayman (2012) and Park et al. (2019) determine that men spend more than women, while Craggs and Schofield (2009) identify an inverse relationship. For their part, Jang et al. (2004), Alegre et al. (2011), Vasco et al. (2014), and Aguiló et al. (2017) find that this variable is not significant in explaining tourism expenditure. However, it is important to mention that each author applies

a different regression model on different population samples and in destinations that do not necessarily respond to the sun and sand model.

The level of income of tourists also appears as a significant regressor to explain the tourist expenditure in Monte Hermoso. The higher the income level, the higher the total expenditure. The sample set, whose monthly income is over 80,000 (ARS $), spends 79% more than tourists reporting an income level between 32,000 and 48,000 (ARS $). In literature, income is one of the most relevant regressors to explain tourism expenditure and one of the main variables of the subset of economic restrictions (Marrocu et al., 2015; Gómez-Déniz et al., 2020). These results allow us to accept hypothesis 1 (H1) for group (i) of determinants. Research by Jang et al. (2004), Nicolau and Mas-Ruiz (2007), Rabahy et al. (2009), Kruger et al. (2010), Marcussen (2011), Lin et al. (2015), and Aguiló et al. (2017), among other authors, confirm the hypothesis based on that higher income levels are associated with higher tourist expenditure. In opposition, Craggs and Schofield (2009), while not making direct reference to income, affirm that the socioeconomic status of tourists is not a significant regressor to explain total expenditure, which is remarkable in light of the other findings.

Regarding the occupation variable, the categories "public employee", "private employee", and "retiree" show a negative relationship with respect to spending. This behavior is due to the relationship between i) the average salary and pension corresponding to the categories and ii) the cost of the basic food basket. Public employees, according to the latest available report from December 2018, received an average real salary equivalent to ARS $ 56,320 in August 2019, the private employees had an average salary of ARS $ 93,000 (National Ministry of Labor, Employment and Social Security, 2020), and the minimum salary of retirees was equivalent to ARS $ 12,937 in October 2019 (Pagano, 2020). For its part, the price of the basic food basket for a typical family was ARS $ 34,784.75 in September 2019 (Télam, 2019), while for retirees it amounted to ARS $ 37,815 in October of that same year (Bermúdez, 2019). These data allow us to suggest that, for these population groups, the budget available for tourism is low. The hypothesis 2 (H2) is rejected because there are differences between the occupation categories. The professionals demonstrate a positive relationship with respect to tourist expenditure as opposed to the rest ones. However, the applied model shows that occupation is not a significant regressor to explain the dependent variable. This contrasts with the results obtained by Fredman (2008), Craggs and

Schofield (2009), Alegre et al. (2011), and Park et al. (2019), who found that occupation is a statistically significant variable.

Origin is also a strongly significant variable in the estimation of the model. Tourists whose place of residence is the city of Bahía Blanca or the towns of SW Buenos Aires spend less than those coming from other regions of the country. Comparatively, tourists belonging to the "SW Bonaerense" category spend 57% less while those from Bahía Blanca 41% less. These results cannot be contrasted with other studies due to the differences with respect to the geographical location of the destination and the origin of the demand. However, different authors (Nicolau & Mas-Ruiz, 2007; Wu et al., 2013) consider the distance between origin and destination as an explanatory variable. In this regard, they state that the relationship between distance and expenditure is positive since their stay tends to be longer. Accordingly, it can be inferred that tourists from Bahía Blanca and the SW Buenos Aires region spend less since they are the closest outbound tourist centers to Monte Hermoso. In effect, the hypothesis 4 (H4), relative to group iii of the determinants of tourist expenditure, is accepted. In general, the visitors from other tourist regions of Argentina (Norte, Litoral, Patagonia, Centro-Córdoba and Cuyo) travel more than 300 km.
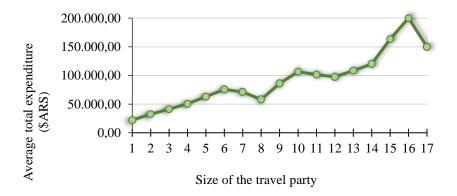

Figure 3. *Total tourism expenditure by size of the travel party*

Within the set of travel-related variables, the travel party size (Figure 3) has a positive and highly significant influence on total expenditure. The studies reviewed do not show homogeneous results in this regard. Nicolau and Mas-Ruiz (2007) accept the hypothesis that larger household size increases tourist expenditure, although they also state that the effects of this variable are uncertain according to another research. In this sense, Anderson (2010) establishes that the increase in group size by one unit is reflected by the increase in total expenditure, but Wang et al. (2006) and Gómez-Déniz et al. (2020) argue that the size of the group negatively influences the expenditure made by both per person and per group. Even

though Jang et al. (2004) do not focus on size, they identify that tourist who travels in groups spend more than those who travel alone, establishing impulse purchase prompted by group dynamics as a likely cause.

The presence and number of children in the travel group (Figure 4) also has a positive and significant impact on the behavior of the dependent variable. According to the processed data, a single child in the group represents a 30% increase in total tourism expenditure. However, it is also observed that from the presence of seven children per group, the average total tourist expenditure decreases 26% with respect to a group with six children. These findings are not consistent with those of Wang et al. (2006) and Nicolau and Mas-Ruiz (2007), whose studies show that this variable is not a significant regressor. For their part, Alegre et al. (2011) and Haq et al. (2019) affirm that the presence and number of children are explanatory regressors of the variable, although their relationship with it is negative. Finally, Jang et al. (2004) also find that the number of children in the group is set up as a determining variable of expenditure, despite not having a significant impact on the total amount.
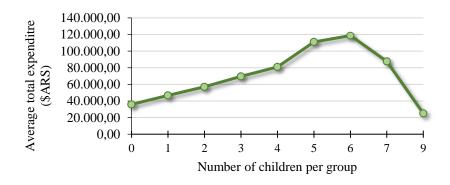

Figure 4. *Average total expenditure by groups with children*

Length of stay is also a significant regressor with respect to expenditure. In the case of Monte Hermoso, tourist expenditure increases progressively up to a 13-day stay while, after 14 days the dependent variable decreases. In accordance with this, the hypothesis 3 of group ii is rejected. In this case, as they are domestic tourists, stays longer than 15 days are usually related to residential tourism, which means no expense in the accommodation component. However, the relation of this regressor could be different in coastal destinations with international tourism. Other authors like Gómez-Déniz et al. (2020) obtain that the coefficient for length of stay is positive and statistically significant. Likewise, Vasco et al. (2014) find a positive relationship between these variables, each additional night during the first two days increases spending by 70% and from that point on

it decreases by 13%. In contrast, Alegre et al. (2011) find that the length of stay has a negative impact on spending; with a greater number of days at the destination, the group spends less. However, they do not specify whether this behavior responds to a directly proportional relationship.

Accommodation, except for the camping modality, is a highly significant regressor in the explanation of the variable analyzed. This is explained by the difference in prices between the camping and other modalities. The apart hotel substantially influences the level of total expenditure made by the group. This is due to its location in the eastern sector of Monte Hermoso where the price of land is the highest. Espasa et al. (2010) establish that, on average, a vacant lot costs between US $ 120,000 and US $ 150,000. These establishments provide quality services and personalized attention in modern facilities. Cottages also have a significant weight on tourist spending, as the services and location are like those of the apart hotel. Accommodation in rental houses has a high incidence in total expenditure since it responds to the main modality of the destination. Regarding hotels, unlike other sun and sand destinations, Monte Hermoso has low category establishments (1 to 3 stars). The behavior of these last two types of accommodation is consistent with the evidence presented by Aguiló et al. (2017). In their study on the visiting population of Palma de Majorca, they identify that those who stay in low-category hotels and apartments spend more than tourists staying in higher-category hotels. On the other hand, Gómez-Déniz et al. (2020) studied the determinants of spending by tourists from the Canary Islands. They found that the modality with the highest incidence is the hotel, stating a difference between high and low category hotels. Due to the services included in the rate, the higher the category, the lower the expenditure.

The type of travel group is a significant regressor, particularly categories such as "couples" and "single person"; however, their relationship with spending is negative. These groups spend less than the "friends" groups and the reference variable. This behavior is consistent with that of the variable "group size" since a positive relationship was identified between the number of members of the group and total expenditure. These results can be associated with those of Craggs and Schofield (2009). According to these authors, traveling with a family implies higher expenditure than traveling without family or with another group. However, in the literature reviewed this variable is not presented explicitly nor are these analytical categories, so it is not possible to open a discussion. Finally, in relation to tourist motivation, the study reveals that it is not a determinant of expenditure, although all categories show a positive

relationship. The only one that presents a significant coefficient is "rest and quiet". This regressor is not compared with other results because the motivations considered respond directly to the characteristics of the destination, which, as for the previous variable, prevents any discussion. No other research has been found in a study area that provides similar features to those observed in Monte Hermoso. In the absence of a significant relationship between the variables, it is not possible to accept or reject hypothesis 5 (H_5) established for group iv.

CONCLUSIONS

Monte Hermoso is a sun and sand destination in South-west Buenos Aires and its main economic activity is tourism. According to the data collected through surveys administered to tourists during the 2020 summer season (austral summer), it is determined that the tourist demand of the destination is made up of families (72%) and couples (17%). Their level of education is high, as 70% have completed their higher education. Regarding occupation, 32% are private employees and 27% are professionals. The demand for the destination comes from the interior of Argentina, mainly from the city of Bahía Blanca (25%) and from the Patagonia tourist region (24%). The sea and the beach, as well as the tranquility and proximity are the main features for which tourists choose Monte Hermoso for their holidays. The average stay is 10 days, and the most frequent type of accommodation is rental housing (60%). The average total expenditure made by tourists was US $ 783.80.

In order to establish the relationship between tourist expenditure and its determinants, an Ordinary Least Squares regression model was applied. For this purpose, the dependent variable was expressed as the natural logarithm of total tourism expenditure and the independent variables were organized into two categories: socioeconomic and travel related. From the results obtained, the answers to the questions posed at the beginning can be settled showing that the determinants in coastal destination, where the main demand are domestic, are gender, income, origin, travel of the party size, the number of children per group, the length of stay, and the type of the group and accommodation. According to the limitations presented in the results section, it is possible to affirm that the regressors considered in this study are related to the findings of other investigations carried out in destinations with distinct tourism types.

The relationship between expenditure and all the explanatory variables is not in the same direction. Income level, origin, group size, and

type of accommodation explain the behavior of the dependent variable in the coastal destination of the SW Buenos Aires. However, it is not possible to determine for all regressors the same sense of relationship with the explained variable. In the case of socioeconomic variables, it is evident that gender has a significant influence on total tourism expenditure, with men spending on average 15.8% more than women. In turn, the higher the income level, the higher the total expenditure. The sample set as a whole, where monthly income is higher than 80,000 (ARS $), spends 79% more than tourists who declare an income level between 32,000 and 48,000 (ARS $). With respect to the occupation variable, the categories "public employee", "private employee", and "retiree" present a negative relationship related to spending, which is attributed to the relationship between low purchasing power and the cost of the basic food basket. Origin is a highly significant variable in the estimation of the model, tourists from Bahía Blanca and the SW of Buenos Aires spend less time than those coming from other regions of the country.

In the case of variables related to the trip, it was identified that the travel party size has a positive and highly significant influence on total spending. In addition, the presence and number of children also had a positive and significant influence on the behavior of the dependent variable; a single child in the group represents a 30% increase in total tourist expenditure. Regarding the length of stay, it was found that expenditure increases progressively up to 13 days, while, after 14 days, the dependent variable decreases. In relation to accommodation, the apart hotel and cottage categories have a substantial influence on the level of total expenditure made by the group. On the other hand, rental houses have a high incidence in the total expenditure since it responds to the main modality of accommodation of the destination. The type of travel group is a significant regressor, particularly "couples" and "single person" categories, although its relationship with expenditure is negative.

The results obtained in this work constitute a first approach towards a more comprehensive understanding of the behavior of tourist expenditure in the demand for Monte Hermoso. They make it possible to identify the variables that explain tourist expenditure and from there, to know the categories that may be more attractive for the destination. Therefore, it represents a starting point to design strategic guidelines oriented to the different market segments. Nevertheless, it is important to continue this kind of analysis with updated data because the results respond to a static regression model. Furthermore, in the absence of studies in coastal destinations with similar features to the tourism demand for

Monte Hermoso, it is necessary to generate analyzes in this regard to determine the scope and degree of explanation of the regressors that in this paper were significant.

Regarding the strategic actions that destination managers and marketing organizations can carry out, the following can be mentioned: with respect to origin, its efforts on attracting other issuing markets (national tourist regions) that generate higher income for the destination, to the detriment of attracting demand from the SW of Buenos Aires. In this sense, it is also important to address accessibility and connectivity to the destination. Design marketing campaigns to attract tourists on weekends since short stays show a higher level of expenditure than longer ones. They should be aimed at the "friends" market niche due it shows a relatively higher expense than couples and single people. To reach this niche, it is advisable to use social media. Another strategy is bet on improving the quality of accommodation services, with special emphasis on the apart hotel and rental housing, since are the categories with the highest level of expenditure. Therefore, to capture a demand segment with a higher level of spending, it is relevant to add hotels of a higher category than the current ones. Lastly, promoting the development of activities and recreational facilities for children can be profitable since families with children reveal a higher expenditure level.

Finally, it is relevant to point out the practical limitations of the results achieved:

- The instrument used for gathering the information is not analogous to the questionnaires used in another research. In effect, the use of different variables and categories in the statistical analysis determine the interpretation of the results.
- In relation to the previous point, sometimes, the discussion of the findings is limited due to the contrasts between the analysis unit and the selected regressors.
- The OLS method provides a static model, therefore it must be considered that the results have a transitory nature. As the features of demand change (an increasingly frequent situation), it is possible that the determinants will also be modified.
- Studies carried out for international destinations are the most frequent in the literature, so the results of this study are not generalizable. In addition, as the research scope is exploratory there is no other findings that allows to determine more relationships between the regressors.

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