



“Gheorghe Asachi” Technical University of Iasi, Romania



ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY IN THE MEDITERRANEAN DESTINATIONS: A LATENT CLASS SEGMENTATION ANALYSIS

Raquel Sánchez-Fernández^{1*}, Maria-Angeles Iniesta-Bonillo¹, Amparo Cervera-Taulet²

¹*University of Almería, Department of Economics and Business, Ctra. Sacramento, s/n, Almería, E-04120, Spain*

²*University of Valencia, Department of Marketing, Avda. Tarongers, s/n, Valencia, E-46022, Spain*

Abstract

This article addresses a cross-destination research to study a key issue for the growth and competitiveness of the tourism sector, which is the perceived environmental sustainability of a destination. Particularly, a segmentation analysis is developed to examine potential unobserved heterogeneity across tourists regarding their perception of environmental sustainability of the destination. 918 tourists of five Mediterranean Sea Basin cities are studied using a latent class segmentation technique. Results show the existence of three differentiated latent clusters of tourists with low, medium and high perception of environmental sustainability respectively, confirming the validity of this variable for segmenting tourists. Segments are also characterized by demographics and trip-related variables. The findings provide useful information to managers to develop better sustainability programs, tailoring their market offerings and promotion programs towards each segment more efficiently.

Key words: environmental sustainability, latent class segmentation, Mediterranean Arch, tourist destinations, tourist perceptions

Received: September, 2015; Revised final: June, 2016; Accepted: June, 2016

f.

* Author to whom all correspondence should be addressed: e-mail: raquel.sanchez@ual.es; Phone: +34 950214035; Fax: +34 950015178