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Cover Page Footnote

1. Proposal development is not included, considering that, this exercise is not strictly scientific but, the results of the paper have practical implications, and provide useful information for the destination management organisation. Aknowledgments To Eixo Atlántico do Noroeste Peninular, which supported this research. This work is funded by European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) through the Spanish-Portuguese Cross-Border Cooperation Operational Program (POCTEP). The presentation of this work in IRTP2023 was funded by national funds through FCT - Fundação para a Ciência e a Tecnologia, I.P., under project reference no. UID/B/04470/2020.

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Pilgrimage as a Regional Socio-Economic Driver: Case Study of Sarria, Km 0 of the Camino de Santiago

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This study explores the potential of pilgrimage as a catalyst for tourism growth, with a specific focus on the municipality of Sarria, located along the renowned Way of Saint James (El Camino de Santiago). Despite its international fame, many municipalities along the route fail to capitalise on the socio-economic opportunities presented by pilgrimage tourism (Machado & Pardo, 2018). Sarria, known as 'Kilometre Zero' for pilgrims on the French Way, serves as a critical starting point for obtaining the Compostela certificate. This research employs destination planning methodology, utilising qualitative and quantitative data through surveys, interviews, and mystery shopper audits, to analyse Sarria as a tourist destination. A SWOT analysis is provided, followed by a matrix of proposed municipal actions aimed at leveraging the Camino as a resource for tourism development. The findings suggest that pilgrimage, traditionally not associated with tourism development (Vila, Cardoso, Araújo & Brea, 2020), holds untapped potential to attract diverse tourist groups and extend pilgrim stays. The study highlights the importance of micro-planning for local economies and tourism development, with Sarria serving as a model due to its strategic location, cultural heritage, and role in the French Way. The research offers practical implications for municipalities seeking to enhance their tourism strategies by capitalising on pilgrimage routes.

Key Words: Camino de Santiago, tourism planning, pilgrimage, Sarria, tourism development, socio-economic growth

Introduction

Few territories possess a socio-economic development element as potent as the *Camino de Santiago*, yet they fail to harness its national and international renown as a catalyst for comprehensive tourism development (Pardo & Ladeiras, 2022).

In the context of the specific case study, Sarria serves as a starting point or a passage for pilgrims, whether they seek only the achievement of the *compostela* (in the former case) or embark on more than 6 stages of the French Way. Historically, this route has been the primary convergence point among the 10 recognised paths by the Parliament of Galicia and promoted by the regional government (Parliament of Galicia, 2016). Moreover, it represents the 'way per excellence' boasting the richest tradition, highest international recognition, and holds the designation of a UNESCO World Heritage site and the first European Cultural Itinerary (Rodriguez *et al*., 2013). This status has been maintained over the past decade through the establishment of the European Federation of the Camino. Without extensive statistics beyond those provided by the Pilgrim's Office, it's estimated that nearly 50% of pilgrims follow the *Camino Francés* or French Way, of which 61% start from Sarria, while the remaining 40% pass through the municipality (Pilgrim's Office of Santiago de Compostela, 2023).

This paper starts with an initial contextualisation of Sarria within the French Way, followed by a SWOT Analysis (resulting in both qualitative and quantitative data analysis—both existing and generated by the authors—concerning the municipality as a tourist destination). It concludes with a matrix of proposed municipal actions geared toward fostering tourism centred on the '*Camino*', not because there aren't attractions outside of it, but rather because this practical case aims to demonstrate

how pilgrimage, sometimes perceived as separate issue from tourism, can dynamically enhance it and serve as a focus in tourism planning documents.

The distinctive nature of this approach lies in the fact that, to the best of the authors' exploration, this differentiating opportunity has not been utilised in other destination-focused planning. The intention is precisely for pilgrimage to unleash tourism growth and subsequently economic development. This approach is exclusively municipal in nature, without contradicting the logic of the '*geodestinos*' (micro-destination) established by the Galician Tourism Law 7/2011 or the suitability of working on destinations at a scalable level, in line with objectives for markets with longer distances and travel times.

Literature Review

According to estimates by the UNWTO, between 300 and 330 million tourists visit the world's most significant religious sites annually, contributing to roughly 600 million domestic and international religious journeys, with 40% taking place in Europe. As key tourist destinations, religious heritage sites and pilgrimage routes drive international tourism and economic growth (UNWTO, 2014).

In general, the pilgrimage phenomenon has always contributed (in a major or minor way, depending on several factors -number of pilgrims, proximity to the sacred site, level of offer development, etc) to the economic development of the territories (Valiente & Romero, 2011).

In this context, the Saint James Way, *el Camino*, has a protagonist role (Murray, 2021), not only due to the number of pilgrims, but for its several designations (Worldwide heritage, European itinerary, etc). But, what is more relevant, for this research, several studies that demonstrate the economic impact and the contribution to territorial development have been carried out (Progano, 2018; López & Santos, 2019; Azevedo, 2021), as can be easily understood by observing the socio-economic revitalisation that little villages have on the *Camino's* final stages (Galicia Region, Spain), (Pardellas & Padín, 2014).

The promotion of religious and cultural tourism as a development tool can unite society, give people spiritual

Figure 1: Map of the Camino Frances (French Camino)
Note - Sarria is identified as the 4th stop from Santiago in this map



Source: https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Ruta_del_Camino_de_Santiago_Frances.svg#/media/File:French_Ways_of_St._James.svg

support, promote economic circulation, and improve the community environment, but it can also cause an increase in local social events, inflate consumer costs, leave waste behind, and cause air and environmental pollution. Therefore, in order to achieve sustainable village development, we must not capture the views of a single target group but must ensure that all stakeholders involved (namely residents and visitors) have a basic understanding of environmental literacy and a consensus on sustainable development (Ling, Lin and Liang, 2021).

The first conclusion in the attempt to analyse the literature on the very specific topic of tourism planning of a destination, based on pilgrimage as a pillar of tourism development, is that it hardly exists. There are, yes, abundant works that demonstrate the socio-economic importance of pilgrimage for the territories through which they take place, and this, for different religions and in different continents, from a general point of view for a particular peregrination (Perilla, & Perilla, 2013; Moreno-Melgarejo & Sariego-López, 2019; Gauna, 2019) or for specific territories (Maak, 2009, Juárez, Ramírez Valverde & Mota, 2017; Suárez & Lissett, 2017); however, the necessary scientific groundwork to establish a strategic foundation for tourism planning in this unique context has not been undertaken, neither in literature nor in consultancy works.

Even worse, some studies point out that, the lack of tourism planning, and as a consequence, the absence of adequate policies, results in an 'institutional vacuum' in dealing with religious tourism (Shinde, 2012). In this case, it's not a lack of taking advantage of peregrination but more, problematic, the lack of infrastructural support leading to a condition where a high influx of religious tourists threatens the cultural and environmental sustainability of religious tourism destinations. But, although the importance of planning in religious tourism destinations in general and pilgrimage in particular has been addressed scientifically and more specifically for specific destinations (Collins-Kreiner, 2010; Shinde, 2012; Sivanandamoorthy, 2016), the fact is that the focus on pilgrimage as a pillar of tourism development in a broader perspective has not been given, neither from a methodological point of view, nor for specific case studies.

At this point, and based on the analysis of the literature presented, this paper, based on the traditional methodology of tourism planning of destinations (Padin, 2012; Costa, 2020), develops, for an (obvious) case of pilgrimage as a strength of the destination, a proposal for micro-planning based on this potential for exploitation.

Methodology

The development of a planning document is an essential condition for the subsequent intelligent management of any destination (Bercial & Timón, 2005). While in this case, it pertains to micro-planning with a specific focus, it is imperative to commence the collection of quantitative and qualitative information concerning tourism supply and demand. This process is based on pre-existing characterisation and diagnostic studies of the territory, fieldwork generating primary data, both virtual and in-person mystery shopping, as well as the integration of secondary sources for the formulation of action proposals that align with the conducted diagnosis, which is also a part of this methodology.

Using the referred destination planning methodology (Bercial & Timón, D. 2005), this work successfully compiled and analysed data through online surveys, interviews, mystery shopper audits, and literature analysis, resulting in a viable set of actions for implementation by the municipality. The methodology provided a structured approach to diagnose key issues and identify opportunities. The actions have been carefully evaluated and a comprehensive plan has been formulated, with ongoing monitoring to ensure successful execution.

The geographic area under consideration strictly corresponds to the municipality of Sarria, serving as a prime example for other municipalities, supra municipal entities, or regional areas with pilgrimage routes, especially those that possess a clearly defined starting point for the pilgrimage.

Primary Information Sources

For this study, primary information sources were adapted to the current context and the restrictions posed by the COVID-19 health crisis. Despite the crisis being under control, it had not completely ended when the research

Table 1: Information Sources	
Primary Information Sources	Online questionnaire targeted at local stakeholders. Personal visits, encompassing accommodations, restaurants, and attractions. In-person interview with the tourism authorities. Virtual mystery shopper assessment. Benchmarking analysis.
Secondary Information Sources	Know-how Literature analysis.
Source: Author's Elaboration	

was carried out. Information was gathered through several methods (see Table 1).

Firstly, a visit to the territory was conducted, and an interview with the responsible councillor took place. Additionally, virtual communication formats were used to gather information. The authors were also invited to participate in an international best practice exchange event where the Camino de Santiago was presented as an economic development opportunity for the areas it traverses. This event included guided visits to tourist points of interest in the municipality related to the Camino, and it provided insights into the mayor's vision on the subject and the challenges in resident-pilgrim coexistence.

As an integral component of the on-site research tools, a mystery shopper exercise was conducted to replicate the experience of a non-pilgrimage tourist in Sarria. This involved booking accommodation through online platforms like 'Booking.com' and selecting restaurants via TripAdvisor. Points of interest were researched online, and information was also sought in local dining establishments.

Primary data were obtained via an online questionnaire, with a greater emphasis on closed questions, being an analytical study, in which the variables of interest were selected to explore the existing relationship between them, taking advantage of their presence or absence in groups of carefully chosen subjects, so that control over the identified variables was possible (Casas *et al*., 2002). These online questionnaires were distributed to various actors within the territory. Responses were collected over a five-week period. However, the level of interest and participation was lower than expected, making it challenging to obtain representative responses from all actors and sectors. This is not surprising as online surveys usually present this problem (Shih & Fan, 2008; Fan & Yan, 2010) given that the subject is usually not motivated to respond, unless they have some interest in the results of the study. The purpose of this questionnaire is to gain valuable insights from stakeholders in the private sector regarding the current status of Sarria as a potential tourist destination. The authors sought to delve into their perspectives on the existing services and products, assess the presence or absence of a distinct brand identity, analyse the type of audience it currently attracts, and explore potential promotional and marketing strategies that could enhance the area's unique characteristics. Additionally, these questions sought their evaluation of the potential for leveraging the Camino de Santiago to benefit both the municipality and, in particular, their private sector.

The questionnaire comprised a total of 24 questions, featuring a blend of closed-ended queries designed to obtain specific information, such as visitor age groups and motivations. Furthermore, open-ended questions were included to capture stakeholders' opinions on strategic projects and gather qualitative insights. The questionnaire was divided into four sections, as follows:

a) information about the responding institution (the questionnaire respondent);

b) details about the studied territory, Sarria;

c) information about the visitors, and;

d) information about the stakeholders.

To complement the research from the visitor's perspective, a virtual mystery shopper exercise involved evaluating the quantity and quality of information

available online for potential tourists planning a trip to Sarria. This comprehensive assessment aimed to provide insights into the destination's appeal for potential visitors, whether they are planning a trip or making decisions at the moment of choice, offering recommendations for improvement based on the identified areas of opportunity. For this purpose, TripAdvisor was selected as the main information platform, since it provides accessible information well-regarded among travellers for its functionality, allowing users to post reviews, share information, and upload photos of their visits. It's worth emphasising that the rankings on platforms like TripAdvisor and Booking predominantly mirror the experiences, preferences, and expectations of pilgrim visitors, rendering comparisons with other destinations or visitor demographics somewhat complex. This exploration was conducted by an expert with no prior knowledge of the municipality, and the results were cross-referenced with the traditional - in person - mystery shopper data for validation.

The study also used benchmarking as a methodology, particularly in the development of proposed actions. Practices from similar territories or destinations were integrated into the analysis. These initiatives were selected based on their similarity to the analysed territory, including socio demographic conditions, activity and service offerings, cultural and natural heritage, and demand profiles. These practices, having been successful in other places, were considered for adaptation to the local context, offering valuable insights for implementation.

Secondary Sources

The secondary information sources for this study include the authors' expertise, including real-world, academic, and scientific knowledge in the field of tourism planning. Their knowledge and experience enabled them to propose strategies for the development and utilisation of tourism in the municipality.

Finally, a review of existing literature was conducted to complement the fieldwork. This involved an analysis of scientific and academic research as well as promotional materials provided by the municipality. In addition to the information received from the Sarria Tourist Office, data from the destination, the province, and the autonomous community were also examined. Ideally, municipal statistics from the tourist office would have been part of the diagnosis; however, these secondary data were not available at the time of report completion.

Findings

Online Questionnaire Targeted at Local Stakeholders

One of the primary needs identified is the enhancement of the quality of existing activities, as indicated by 87.5% of participant responses. Secondly, there is a demand for an increase in the range of activities. Finally, with similar percentages, other options include the development of packages or complementary experiences, the promotion of the territory, improvement of accessibility / connectivity, and the strengthening of public-private cooperation. The improvement of the quality of both accommodation and dining establishments was also mentioned. However, none of the respondents expressed a need for an increase in the number of rooms or restaurants. This highlights that the predominant concern revolves around complementary offerings, while accommodation and dining establishments should focus on enhancing their quality.

Regarding the acceptance of tourism by residents / the community, 50% indicate a high level of acceptance, while 37.5% consider it to be low. Finally, concerning public-private cooperation, there is a perception that could be described as improvable: 37.5% believe there is no collaboration, another 37.5% acknowledge its existence but suggest room for improvement, and 12.5% are unsure. Only the remaining 12.5% consider it optimal.

The vision articulated by local stakeholders regarding improvements or investments encompasses several facets. These include addressing mobility, enhancing accessibility in public transportation to the municipality, focusing on the promotion of Sarria as a pivotal point along the Camino, and rectifying the erroneous image that has been created, portraying the use of the Camino in Sarria as a catalyst for mass tourism. Furthermore, suggestions extend to the acquisition of spaces facilitating the 'reconstruction' of heritage, initiatives

Table 2: Virtual Mystery Shopper Compilation			
Platform	Site	Type of platform	Findings
Sarria Tourism Website	https://sarriaturismo.com	Institutional website	The available information on this website accurately corresponds to official data, encompassing a directory of both tourist and non-tourist services. The information is easily accessible and well-structured.
Tripadvisor Sarria	https://www.tripadvisor.com	Travel online platform	This platform provides accessible information well-regarded among travellers for its functionality, allowing users to post reviews, share information, and upload photos of their visits.
Instagram Sarria	https://www.facebook.com/sarria.es	Social Media	This page shares information about the city's agenda, with a particular focus on events and festivals.
Facebook Sarria	@concello_de_sarria	Social Media	This account covers general topics and is not specifically focuses on tourism, lacking both informative and promotional content.
Source: Own elaboration based on secondary sources and primary data produced by the authors			

for reforestation, and the provision of spaces for concerts and exhibitions. Additional recommendations include the establishment of a traditional market, the creation of an interpretation centre delving into Sarria's origin, and, overall, the introduction of more activities for visitors.

Fieldwork (Personal Visits)

During the field work, specifically the authors' visit to the territory, the objective was to replicate the experience of a non-pilgrimage tourist in Sarria, with a focus on online information channels for trip planning. Regarding local points of interest, visits were made to those identified during trip planning through web research and recommendations from the municipality. Information about these sites in the local area was challenging to find, including verbal recommendations.

Additionally, the tourist office in the historic centre was closed during the visit. While the accommodation was in the city centre, allowing for walking visits to both the accommodation and the historic centre, the mystery shopper also explored the area by car to appreciate the natural surroundings and nature tourism offerings. An information office for pilgrims was identified at the town entrance, highlighting challenges in organising car presence in the urban centre and the vicinity of the historic area. This especially pertained to parking and pedestrian-bicycle coexistence.

Interviews with Tourism Authority & Public Servant

Two interviews were conducted to gather the perspectives and expectations of politicians, as well as tourism professionals. In both cases, the participants were women aged between 35 and 45, residing in Sarria.

Recognising the pivotal economic role of the Camino de Santiago in Sarria and the imperative to reduce reliance on a specific pilgrim profile, there is a consensus on the need for diversification. Consequently, initiatives are underway to promote alternative offerings, aligning with the document's objective of attracting a broader audience of non-pilgrim tourists. Concurrently, efforts are being made to digitally transform traditional business models, tailoring them to the preferences of pilgrims to augment their average expenditure at the destination.

Conversely, a commendable collaborative dynamic is evident within a substantial segment of the 'Camino Francés' product's value chain. Nevertheless, the onus of innovating, promoting, and ensuring the quality of the tourist experience still predominantly falls on the local authority, operating without a specialised team for such endeavours.

The Camino de Santiago currently serves as a magnet, not only for pilgrims but also for young talent and foreign investment. Pilgrims, having initially explored the route as tourists, are now choosing to settle in Sarria and embark on entrepreneurial ventures within the Camino-

Table 3: SWOT Analysis Elements Derived from Research Findings

Strengths & Opportunities	Threats & Weaknesses
The starting point at Km 0 of the Way is favoured by around 30% of pilgrims.	Limited accessibility and connectivity pose significant challenges.
Residents extend warm hospitality to visitors.	The cultural offerings in Sarria are not only sporadic but also lack punctuality.
Visitors are provided with a diverse range of services.	Digital promotion channels are underutilised, resulting in a very inadequate online presence.
The territory boasts a wealth of historical and cultural treasures.	The insufficient variety of activities, including tourist animation and leisure spaces, highlights a lack of a comprehensive and complementary offering.
Over half of the pilgrims opt for the French Way.	Contemporary resources related to the Way are lacking, failing to convey a distinctive image of Sarria.
It's an interesting location for exploring other geo-destinations in Galicia.	The low loyalty of pilgrims requires strategic efforts to encourage their return beyond the pilgrimage experience.
The average expenditure of key foreign pilgrim markets is on the rise.	The average length of stay in Sarria is remarkably short, impacting the overall tourism experience.
There's a growing interest among tourists in nature-centric activities.	Sarria's recognition in pilgrim markets is limited to its role on the pilgrimage route, neglecting its broader appeal.
Multigenerational travel is becoming increasingly popular.	Pilgrims do not view Sarria as a destination for tourism upon arrival or during their journey.
Sustainable travel is on the rise as a prevailing trend.	The increasing popularity of alternative pilgrimage routes, especially the Portuguese roads, poses a challenge.
Traditional establishments, antique shops, and flea markets contribute to a rich supply network.	Improved connections are needed to initiate other routes, such as providing convenient access from Sá Carneiro airport for international pilgrims starting the Portuguese routes.
Businesses offering tours, complete with gastronomic experiences, are gaining traction with prior reservations.	
The region and municipality boast a rich culinary heritage.	
Collaborative initiatives with other municipalities are introducing innovative marketplaces along the French Way.	
Existing urban art festival that adds a vibrant cultural dimension to the experience.	

Source: Elaboration based on secondary sources and primary data produced by the authors.

related tourism industry. This pilgrimage route also acts as a catalyst for cooperative initiatives, extending beyond established collaborations with tourism agents in the 'Camiño' product value chain, exemplified by the Galician municipalities' association along the French Way, known as 'Ruta de Historias'.

Furthermore, this visit affirmed the positive evolution of the tourism offerings, primarily catering to pilgrims. Since the mystery client's initial visit, the reopening of numerous hostels previously shuttered due to the pandemic has injected increased vibrancy into tourist activities within the historic district.

Virtual Mystery Shopper

Table 2 presents the findings of the platforms or sites that were analysed to conduct the virtual mystery shopper exercise. A comparison was made between resources available on the territory's official website and those on TripAdvisor, revealing that while most resources are present on both platforms, some lack sufficient information or are not listed on TripAdvisor. This presents an opportunity to promote their existence through an alternative channel, indicating an area for improvement. Furthermore, guided tours by private companies receive the highest ratings and the most comments on the platform, indicating a higher number of visits. However, for attractions such as churches or monuments, visitors express a degree of disappointment due to issues related to accessibility, opening hours, or maintenance, despite acknowledging their cultural and architectural value.

Findings Description and Discussion

The next step in the methodological proposal is the execution of a customised SWOT analysis. This analysis,

Table 4: Link Between Diagnosis and Strategy - Strategies Stemming From the SWOT Analysis

SWOT 1	SWOT 2	STRATEGY
Sarria is located just over 100 km from Santiago, and thus is the ideal location for successful undertaking of the Camino de Santiago. Approximately 30% of pilgrims who arrive in Santiago de Compostella choose Sarria as their starting point.	Low pilgrim retention rates pose a challenge in converting them into future visitors. There's a lack of strategies that encourage their return to the territory beyond the mere pretext of the Camino de Santiago.	Capitalising on the high influx of pilgrims commencing their journey in Sarria to showcase the territory's attractions and invite them to return through various incentives. Designing loyalty programs could be beneficial.
Increasing the average spending (along the Camino) of the primary pilgrim source markets from foreign countries.	Lack of awareness in the pilgrim source markets for the Camino Francés regarding Sarria's distinction along the route and the potential interest in arriving earlier or making a stop to spend at least one day in the area.	Direct promotional efforts towards the source markets to showcase the region's tourism products and stimulate longer stays and higher average spending.
A growing trend in multi-generational and family travels opens up opportunities for new age groups as target audiences.	There is a need for a larger and improved range of activities such as tourist entertainment, natural leisure spaces, guided tours around the town and / or its surroundings.	Develop products related to walking activities, such as hiking, targeted not only at pilgrims but also at individuals from different profiles who could accompany them.
Limited and sporadic cultural offerings, lacking dynamism: concerts, educational workshops, gastronomic experiences, and the like.	More than half of the pilgrims travel the Camino Francés to reach Santiago de Compostela.	Leverage the influx of pilgrims to create tourism and cultural products associated with the Camino de Santiago, specifically the Camino Francés and the attractions along this route, to encourage visits.
More than half of the pilgrims travel the Camino Francés to reach Santiago de Compostela.	Lack of contemporary resources related to the Camino that convey the distinctive and leading image of Sarria in connection with it.	Provide Sarria with an urban image associated with the Camino de Santiago that allows the city to be positioned based on this theme.
A growing trend in multi-generational and family travels opens up opportunities for new age groups as target audiences.	Lack of contemporary resources related to the Camino that convey the distinctive and leading image of Sarria in connection with it.	Design activities or products specifically for children and younger audiences associated with the Camino de Santiago, allowing the initiation of new generations into this journey.

Source. Own elaboration from diagnosis produced by the authors

focused on the Camino de Santiago as a key resource, is designed to be both comprehensive, considering strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats, and simplified, concentrating on key positive and negative elements concerning the territory (Table 3). While not an end in itself, this SWOT analysis serves as a tool for reflection on the necessary interventions in the territory. It aims to leverage strengths and opportunities while addressing and mitigating weaknesses and threats.

Through the SWOT analysis, elements were classified into negative and positive categories, identifying a total of 11 weaknesses and threats, alongside 15 opportunities and strengths. Leveraging this information, we overlaid the results to craft strategies that combine both aspects, aligning with the needs and potentialities of the territory. Table 4 provides an illustrative example of how these strategies were developed based on the outcomes derived from the SWOT analysis.

This diagnosis allowed the identification of actions that, taking advantage of the Way as an exceptional tourism product for the territory, can take advantage of the opportunities and strengths identified and / or mitigate or eliminate threats and weaknesses.

Table 5: Axes and Proposals		
1. Urban Innovation	1.1	'The Way Village' project
	1.2	Urban signage
2. Product Development	2.1	Children's initiation pathway (10km)
	2.2	The small roads to Santiago
	2.3	Integral Center for the Pilgrims' Roads to Santiago
	2.4	Gastronomy
	2.5	Boosting the growth of the 'Sarria Antiques' concept
3. Marketing Solutions	3.1	In origin promotion
	3.2	In situ promotion
	3.3	Main Selling Proposal
Source. Authors' own elaboration		

For this specific territory, the action plan derived from the findings delves into 3 main development axis as presented in Table 5 and outlined in the following sections.

Urban Innovation

One of the most relevant characteristics and noted advantages among all pilgrims is the complete and homogeneous recognition of the Camino along its entire route, based on the idea of uniqueness. However, there is also a universal recognition of the indiscriminate proliferation of signals and signage (Pardo, Cortés & Silva, 2023). This should encourage the city to standardise the signalling not only to reinforce Sarria's identity, which should revolve around the Camino de Santiago, making it the village that stands out. Another objective is to make visible the existing attractions, which are currently challenging for pilgrims or visitors to identify, therefore, visit.

Product Development

Based on the findings, it is evident that diversifying the tourist offerings is imperative in the territory, guiding the plan towards the second axis: Product Development. The focus of these actions is on creating new activities or attractions, such as adapting specific stages of the road for a younger audience, particularly children. Additionally, establishing an informative visitor centre is proposed, where pilgrims can enrich their understanding of the Camino de Santiago as an integral part of their pilgrimage. Furthermore, the plan includes efforts to recognise and showcase the rich gastronomic heritage of Galicia.

Marketing Solutions

The city's promotional efforts go beyond mere participation in events related to the Camino de Santiago or tourism fairs in the places of origin. The goal is to effectively reach the target audience based on the identified places of origin, as outlined in the statistical pilgrim report. Additionally, the objective is to discern the most compelling reasons that attract interest within this specific segment. This also includes on-site promotional efforts to showcase the tourist offerings of the territory, encompassing not only activities but also accommodations, dining, and transportation options. Ultimately, it is crucial to define the value proposition of the territory to ensure effective communication with the target audiences. This involves integrating its unique characteristics, such as being the optimal starting point for those aiming to cover the 100 km journey, into a comprehensive marketing strategy.

Conclusions

Pilgrimage, as pointed out in abundant literature (Lería, 2005; Ledo, Bonín & Iglesias, 2007; Valiente & Romero, 2011; Maak, 2009; Gladstone, 2013; Lin, Ling & Liang, 2021; Salinas, Domingos & Ramírez, 2022;) is a powerful element of socio-economic development, but this happens by inertia, because it lacks a firm pillar formally exploited in tourism planning, as pointed out in the literature review of this work. Since, there is no scientific literature or specific documents of tourism micro planning that address this potential, this paper demonstrates the feasibility of such planning focused on the pilgrimage product.

Therefore, as concluded in this research, the product 'pilgrimage to Santiago de Compostela' in particular (applicable to other pilgrimages), can support the tourist planning of the territory, which, with the same tools / techniques as a general planning document, derives a

battery of proposals for action for the tourist development (and consequently, socio-economic development, of the territory). In each case, the peculiarities are to be assessed, but the profile of the pilgrim is very common in relation to, in the abstract, the potentialities of their conversion into a tourist, before, during or after the pilgrimage.

Aspects such as the specificity of the promotion *in situ* (once the pilgrim is already at the destination - regardless of whether it is the starting point of the pilgrimage or a transit point - and therefore only gives margin for return) or at origin (which allows the planning of the trip contemplating the tourist stay - or not) will be common elements to any tourism planning document based on the potential of religious pilgrimage tourism of a destination. Others will be specific to the destination's role in the pilgrimage route (which, in the case of this study, was very high).

In any case, the fundamental step lies in identifying the pilgrimage reality in its correct tourist potential, as much more than a route that 'casually' passes through a territory and that has no more than an inertia of immediate wealth generation by the consumption made by the pilgrim. Once this step has been taken, it is important to follow the tools and phases of planning, adjusting them *ad hoc* to the pilgrimage phenomenon.

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