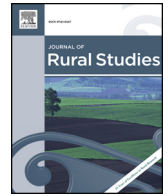




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Understanding the impact of intentions in the adoption of local development practices by rural tourism hosts in Portugal

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ABSTRACT

The role of tourism in the revitalization of rural peripheral areas has been highlighted both in academic and political discourse, with tourism entrepreneurs, particularly local hosts, being recognized as central in the process. However, the role of individual enterprises and entrepreneurs is largely underestimated in the literature and models of destination development. Using the Central Region of Portugal as a case study, this research investigates the impact of pro-development intentions on the behaviour of rural tourism hosts in actually promoting rural development. For this purpose, an empirical model was estimated showing that intentions are important but insufficient to explain behaviour. Other factors such as lodgement location, business success, manager's residence, level of education, and past professional experience, are crucial to explain the adoption of local development practices by local hosts.

1. Introduction

In most European regions, the decline of agriculture and other traditional rural activities has had strong economic, social and environmental impacts which have been widely debated in the literature (Cloke and Goodwin, 1993; Marsden, 1995, 1998; Baptista, 2003; Cloke, 2006; Shucksmith, 2006; Gliessman, 2012; Van der Ploeg, 2018). Although agriculture remains central to current visions of rural development, different functions, such as territorial and environmental management and the production of new goods and services are now assigned to farmers and rural communities which are being encouraged to perform a set of complementary activities (CCE, 1988; Marsden, 1995, 1998; OECD, 2006; Figueiredo, 2008; Milone and Ventura, 2010; Vandermeer and Perfecto, 2012; Milone et al., 2015; Silva et al., 2016; Rivera et al., 2018; Szumelda, 2019). While multifunctionality is gaining pace, sustainable rural tourism is seen as a key component of local development in rural areas of European and non-European regions (Luloff et al., 1994; Sharpley, 2000; Saxena and Ilbery, 2008; Holmes, 2010; Mcareavey and McDonagh, 2011; EU, 2013; Lee et al., 2015; Hoefle, 2016), particularly in more peripheral regions, where the emergence of new sectors has not been able to overcome the reduction of rural communities' economic opportunities, the declining of public service provision and infrastructural deficits. As stressed by several authors (Luloff et al., 1994; Baum and Hagen, 1999; Cristóvão, 2000; Wilson

et al., 2001; Ribeiro and Marques, 2002; Kastenholz, 2004; Eusébio et al., 2017), one of the most popular non-traditional rural development strategies has been tourism and complementary businesses such as recreational activities, arts and crafts.

Tourism entrepreneurs, particularly local hosts, are an integral part of this process because beyond their own individual contribution, they offer job opportunities, stimulate other sectors of the local economy and improve the attractiveness of their locale. Hosting plays such a relevant role in rural tourism that this type of tourist product is defined in Portugal by the typology of the accommodations, namely: country houses, agro-tourism, village tourism and rural hotels. Heritage hotels may also be included, when located in rural areas. Tourism activities related to Nature and natural resources, provided by specialized companies or other types of accommodation complete the "rural tourism" product. In most European peripheral regions, including a significant part of Central Portugal, small rural tourism enterprises are the foundation of the tourism product. Smallness of scale may represent an advantage in responding to the growing demand for alternative experiences by rural and nature tourists. In these settings, the establishment of small tourism entrepreneurs is often grounded in rationalities other than economic ones, being balanced between market and social demands. However, as pointed out by Komppula (2014), the role of individual enterprises and entrepreneurs is largely underestimated in the literature and models of destination development. Moreover, the

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concern of small rural entrepreneurs with local development and the way they integrate that concern with their own motivations and attitudes has not been discussed in the literature.

In this context, the main goal of the present research is to investigate the impact of intentions on the behaviour of small, rural tourism hosts. By applying the Theory of Planned Behaviour (Triandis, 1980; Ajzen, 1985, 1991), we will seek to understand if local development was a key intention for entrepreneurship and whether the intention manifested in actual behaviour. More specifically, drawing upon the estimation of an empirical model based on a survey conducted in the Central Region of Portugal, the authors investigate if entrepreneurs' intentions determine the probability that they will later engage in development-promoting actions, and search for the factors that contribute to improve or worsen the correlation between initial intentions and current rural development practices.

To the best of the authors' knowledge, this study is among the first to empirically test the influence of an entrepreneur's intentions on actual behaviour in the context of small, rural tourism firms. This is however a relevant issue because, if rural tourism entrepreneurs are not able to adopt actions consistent with their ongoing intentions to contribute to local development, their potential contribution remains unrealized. For this reason, it is important to understand the so-called intention–action gap and to investigate under what conditions tourism entrepreneurs turn their intentions to promote local development into actions or fail to do so.

The paper begins with a review of the relevant literature, focusing on the role of small, rural tourism entrepreneurs on destination development, the motivations and rationality of small-scale rural tourism entrepreneurs, and the theory around the intention–behaviour gap. The research methods are then presented, including a description of the Central Region of Portugal where this study was conducted, the methodology in data collection and the model. The following section details the empirical results and finally the main conclusions and some implications of the present research are outlined.

2. Theoretical framework

2.1. The role of small rural tourism entrepreneurs on destination development

Even if the discussion around the meaning of entrepreneur and entrepreneurship is not the focus of the study, it is important to clarify the terminology used in the present context. Few small-scale entrepreneurs within tourism share the characteristics usually ascribed to entrepreneurs, such as creativity, innovation, risk-taking and, above all, the pursuit of economic growth. Besides, a wide range of entrepreneurial cultures can be found (Shaw, 2004). Therefore, following Van Praag and Versloot (2007), a broad empirical definition of entrepreneur was employed in the present study. The entrepreneur is perceived as a market entrant or a young firm that has recently entered the market, imposing no restrictions related to size, primary/secondary activity, level of innovation, etc. In this sense, all the owners of small rural lodgements that participate in this study are classified as 'entrepreneurs' at the time they start their businesses. Some of them still are, since they remain very active in developing new ideas for their businesses, but others have operated in the market for many years and have developed a more passive attitude.

Entrepreneurs join other social actors to promote local development. This type of development, particularly when it occurs in rural areas, is small-scale, decentralized and strongly rooted in the territory phenomenon, with a strong endogenous component and participation of the local community and local economic, social and institutional actors (Trigal, 2015: 165). If in local development the environmental component is integrated, we can talk about sustainable local development, as being socially equitable, economically viable and environmentally friendly.

Although small business owners are sometimes regarded as problematic for rural development because of their alleged risk aversion, lack of ambition, insignificant investment in marketing, little additional training for their staff and disconnection with the needs of many local economies (Hall and Rusher, 2005; Haven-Tang and Jones, 2012; Lane and Kastenholz, 2015), a number of authors have highlighted the critical role played by small proprietary businesses on rural revitalization (Ryan et al., 2012; Komppula, 2014; Li et al., 2018). The study by Keen (2004) in New Zealand, for example, shows that small, rural tourism businesses can act as key agents and main facilitators of rural development.

Interesting discussions on the benefits of tourism for rural development can be found in Sharpley (2000), Hall (2004), Iorio and Corsale (2010) or Daniloska and Naumova-Mihajlovska (2015). The contribution of tourism is mainly described in terms of growing income and job creation, adoption of new working practices, business skill improvement, nature conservation, and strengthening of community identity and cohesion. Furthermore, rural tourism is connected with many services, allowing the expansion of complementary businesses such as local foods or local arts and crafts. Equally important, rural tourism has traditionally been developed using existing properties (e.g. farm houses and land property) as touristic lodgements (Flanigan et al., 2014), allowing, as stressed by Silva (2006), the maintenance of ties with the property and the land by a group of people that otherwise would not live in rural areas. However, as pointed out by several authors (e.g. McKercher, 1993; UNEP and WTO, 2006; Hoefle, 2016; Kastenholz et al., 2016), not all the impacts of tourism in rural areas are positive. Rural tourism may predominantly benefit outsiders coming from urban and foreign origins and have little effect on the wellbeing of local communities, particularly when the jobs available for local people are low-paying services. Besides, tourism is a vulnerable and unstable source of income, with low rates of return on investment, very sensitive to actual or perceived changes of destinations and consumer preferences. The threats to traditional social relations, practices and cultural authenticity in order to respond to the touristic demand are other commonly cited negative impacts of tourism. As highlighted by Kastenholz et al. (2016) rural populations have to adapt to additional challenges, like the continuous presence of outsiders and the need to perform a new productive role. In this respect Ooi et al. (2015), mention the enhancement of conflicts and the loss of trust and reciprocity towards newcomers as a result of tourism and amenity migration.

In order to rely on tourism as an effective alternative to promote sustainable development in rural areas, forms of tourism explicitly linked to the territories are crucial (Saxena et al., 2007; Morgan, 2012). As underlined by Kastenholz et al. (2018), economic sustainability requires the generation of economic benefits for local communities by setting into value local assets and competences. In this context, the authors highlight the importance of job creation, farm diversification and the promotion of local products. In the words of Lane and Kastenholz (2015), this approach suggests the promotion of rural tourism based on local rural resources – cultural, historical, landscape-based – and networking (among local actors and between local and extra-local agents).

Small tourism entrepreneurs are an integral part of rural development because they contribute to the revitalization of the social and economic life of a community by generating income, which can improve the environment and landscape through a higher level of general business activity (Bosworth and Atterton, 2012). As stated by Koh and Hatten (2002), following the idea of Drucker (1985), only tourism entrepreneurs can convert climate, landforms, flora and fauna, historic vestiges, and ethno-cultural features into tourism resources that may be transformed into touristic products. The tourism entrepreneur is therefore the catalyst of the tourism development ripple and the sculptor of the touristic landscape in a community (Koh and Hatten, 2002).

Lane et al. (2013) show that, for the rural tourism business,

accommodation is perhaps the most essential ingredient in the rural tourism equation because overnight visitors have higher spending levels than day visitors, and more of the expenditure on accommodation is retained in the local economy when compared to other tourism spending. The authors also show that expenditure on accommodation generates more jobs for a given capital expenditure than retailing, restaurants or attraction developments. Besides, as they state, rural accommodations are mainly small units, locally owned, differentiating the rural tourism product and allowing a personal contact with hosts, which is a key reason why people choose rural holidays (Kastenholz and Sparrer, 2009).

As Haven-Tang and Jones (2012) highlight, the strong relationship between agricultural products, culinary heritage and tourism allows the participation of the visitor in the local food and drink supply chains, contributing to a greater involvement in the “rural experience” and to local development. Furthermore, by diversifying the economic structure of local communities, rural tourism entrepreneurs reduce the vulnerability of those communities to changes in the social, economic and environmental framework of traditional rural activities (Fotiadis et al., 2016).

However, in order to contribute to local development, the entrepreneurs must be embedded; that is, they have to become part of the local structure (Hess, 2004). As stated by Wilson et al. (2001) tourism and tourism-related businesses are not isolated from the larger community and its issues. Following a community approach to tourism development and entrepreneurship, the authors underscore that tourism must be seen as a community product, directly involving the community and the local capabilities. Bosworth and Atterton (2012) define local embeddedness as the situation where economic and social actions are influenced by being and feeling part of a local community. In this context, social and economic structures and relationships are continually being renegotiated and reshaped but control remains within the local area. If locally embedded, an entrepreneur has easier access to local resources and information that may be crucial to business success.

Cawley and Gillmor (2008) identify seven features characteristic of business integration in the domain of rural tourism: an ethos of promoting multidimensional sustainability, the empowerment of local people, endogenous ownership and resource use, complementary to other economic sectors and activities, an appropriate scale of development, networking among stakeholders, and embedment in local systems. The authors emphasize that appropriate local embedding and effective networking are instrumental in achieving an overall strategy of sustainable development. The study by Bosworth and Atterton (2012) goes in the same direction. The authors conclude that both local embedding and extra local connectivity are essential and related ingredients for rural development.

Komppula (2014) presents an interesting literature review about the relevance of collaboration and networking among small enterprises in rural areas. In particular, the author underlines the findings of Saxena and Ilbery (2008) and Komppula (2004) which indicate that informal cooperation among entrepreneurs may be the only form of networking among small tourism businesses. Shaw (2004) states that these networks may mostly include friends or family members who provide some form of “collective” experience or social capital, emphasizing that these kind of informal networks can be constraining, because they provide limited experiences and may increase the tendency for a survivor rather than a growth strategy. Regarding Portugal, the results of Pato and Kastenholz (2017) show that the majority of rural lodging suppliers dedicate very little of their time to management and are engaged in other professional activities, which provide most of their household income. While these professional activities could enhance extra local connectivity, Lane and Kastenholz (2015) mention that lodging suppliers seem not to have been able to create synergies with other local actors. This means that embeddedness and effective networking of the hosts in and with local communities may not have been enough to accomplish local and extra-local collaboration and to fulfill their

potential as rural development actors.

2.2. Rationality and motivations of small-scale rural tourism entrepreneurs

Partly because of its genesis, as farm-based business, rural tourism is characterized by small family firms (Horobin and Long, 1996; Getz and Carlsen, 2000, 2005; Peters and Buhalis, 2013) that are sometimes seen as having low engagement with wider destination development strategies, low managerial and entrepreneurial skills, and no desire to pursue commercial objectives, such as business growth (Jones and Haven-Tang, 2005; Thomas et al., 2011). Another vision, however, highlights the specific rationality and cultural complexity of small firms, emphasizing that they cannot be understood through Schumpeter's established business model of the growth-oriented entrepreneur (Andersson et al., 2002; Legohérel et al., 2004; Zhao and Getz, 2008; Kallmuenzer and Peters, 2018).

Using the classification presented by Jaafar et al. (2015), the reasons why small business owner-managers establish their business can be categorized into two main groups: push factors and pull factors. Push factors are circumstances, such as unemployment or job uncertainty, that compel people to leave a current situation. Pull factors are factors which attract entrepreneurs and include the desire to be one's own boss, high profits and available business opportunities. Some of the motivations of small business entrepreneurs in rural tourism are the creation of personal and family employment, earning additional income, lifestyle, and personal fulfilment (Getz and Carlsen, 2000). The literature also shows that motivations are linked to the satisfaction of being appreciated and valued by others, not only customers or tourists but also by the local people who value the preservation and the promotion of local heritage (Cavaco, 2000). Equally important, the interaction with people from different cultures is also recognized as an incentive for rural tourism entrepreneurship (Morrison and King, 2002; Simpson, 2008).

Several studies, such as Morrison and King (2002) and Polo-Peña et al. (2013) mention that small firms may continue to operate, despite small profits, because entrepreneurs use their business to attain a certain lifestyle and to recover family assets (houses, warehouses, cellars, agricultural equipment, etc.). This is especially true in southern European countries, where many manor houses have lost their socio-economic sustainability and fallen into ruin as a result of the decline of farming systems based on cheap labour (William and Ferguson, 2005; Young, 2006; Filipe and Mascarenhas, 2011).

It is well recognized that the motivations of entrepreneurs in rural tourism go far beyond economic benefits and are often driven by several principles and values, which are found among the so-called lifestyle entrepreneurs (Atejevic and Doorne, 2000, 2003; Carlsen et al., 2008; Getz and Petersen, 2005; Peters et al., 2009; Kallmuenzer and Peters, 2018). As pointed out by Marques and Cunha (2013), the term ‘lifestyle’ is often associated with the balance between work and personal life, meaning that the entrepreneur is involved in a range of activities of relevance to himself beyond those concerning the business. Lifestyle entrepreneurs are motivated by social and cultural values along with development and business growth, and have a remarkable sense of ‘mission.’ They identify themselves with the community and with values such as sustainability, favouring a particular way of doing business and increasing ‘social capital.’ In the words of Font et al. (2016), their multiple goals can be explained as utility maximization, opposed to profit maximization, based on a trade-off between income/growth and quality of life.

The issue of rural sustainable development as a motivation to start a small rural tourism business is scarcely debated in the literature. Some authors have investigated the motivation for the adoption of corporate social responsibility (CSR) practices but, as pointed out by Garaya and Font (2012), little attention has been paid to the service sector and even less to small and medium-sizes accommodation businesses. Besides, for the touristic sector, the CSR cases reported in the literature mainly focus on environmental practices rather than in social and economic

dimensions (e.g. Dewhurst and Thomas, 2003; Sampaio et al., 2012). Two exceptions are the studies by Garaya and Font (2012) and Font et al. (2016) which aim to explain the main reasons leading small and medium-sized tourism enterprises to use pro-sustainable development practices, combining environmental, social and economic dimensions.

Garaya and Font (2012), following other authors, state that the active and voluntary contribution of enterprise to environmental, social and economic improvement may be explained by “competitiveness,” “legitimacy” or “altruism.” Competitiveness refers to competitive advantages through cost reduction, sales increases, new market opportunities and company image. Legitimacy is related to compliance with social norms and values in order to enhance the company reputation among the stakeholders affected by the enterprise activity. Finally, altruism aims to explain enterprise behaviour from accepting society and nature as the real stakeholders. According to the authors, enterprises driven by competitiveness mainly respond to shareholders and investors, those driven by legitimization focus on a broader range of stakeholders, such as employees, clients and public administration, while altruistic driven enterprises respond to local and global societal concerns. While in large enterprises CSR is mainly a systematic process, involving high managerial skills, with competitive purposes, small enterprises seldom rely on formalized plans. More often, decision making is an extension of the owner-manager’s personality and characteristics, relying more on culture, values and habits than in profit (Font et al., 2016).

Font et al. (2016) define pro-sustainability behaviour as the use of practices that reconcile environmental preservation, social equity, and economic demands, ranging from water and energy saving measures, to purposefully purchasing locally or ethically produced products, providing labour conditions above the legal requirements, or promoting cultural and heritage preservation. The main economic and social practices referred to by the small and medium accommodation entrepreneurs that participated in their study includes encouraging customers to consume local products and choosing local suppliers, supporting local community development and heritage conservation, promoting gender equality, encouraging respect for culture and language and introducing adapted facilities for disabled people.

2.3. The intention-behaviour gap

The theory of planned behaviour (Triandis, 1980; Ajzen, 1985, 1991) posits that human behaviour is guided by three types of constructs: 1) behavioural beliefs, which are beliefs about the effects of the behaviour on a given outcome and may produce a favourable or unfavourable attitude toward the behaviour; 2) normative beliefs, which are beliefs about the normative expectations of important referent individuals or groups, resulting in a subjective norm or perceived social pressure to engage or not engage in a behaviour; and 3) control beliefs, which are beliefs about the presence of factors that may facilitate or hamper the performance of a behaviour, giving rise to perceived behavioural control, i.e. one’s own perceived ability to perform the behaviour. In combination, attitude toward a behaviour, subjective norm, and perception of behavioural control lead to the formation of a behavioural intention. Finally, given a sufficient degree of actual control over behaviour, people are expected to carry out their intentions when the opportunity arises. The theory of planned behaviour has been widely applied in several fields, such as health-related issues (e.g. Sheeran and Taylor, 1999; Albarracín et al., 2001; Conner et al., 2003), ethical consumption (e.g. Carrington et al., 2010; Andorfer and Liebe, 2012; Hassan et al. 2016), technological innovation (e.g. Yu and Tao, 2009; Moghavvemi et al., 2015), entrepreneurship (Schlaegel and Koenig, 2014; Van Gelderen et al., 2015), tourism demand (e.g. Lam and Hsu, 2006; Lee et al., 2014) and sustainable business practices in tourism firms (Dewhurst and Thomas, 2003).

Like other social psychological models, the theory of planned behaviour assumes that intentions are the most important predictor of

behaviour but acknowledges that many behaviours pose difficulties of execution that may limit volitional control (Ajzen, 2002). In fact, several empirical findings show that although intentions are an important prerequisite, external factors can affect actual behaviour and prevent the performance of an intended action (Wiedemann et al., 2009; Lee and Lee, 2013; Moghavvemi et al., 2015; Van Gelderen et al., 2015; Hassan et al. 2016). This phenomenon has been labelled the intention-behaviour gap (Sheeran, 2002).

As pointed out by Van Gelderen et al. (2015), acting upon intentions may be postponed or abandoned because new constraints emerge or the person’s preferences change. Based on a review of intention-action gaps in several domains, and the literature on procrastination, the authors identify action doubt, action fear, and action aversion as avoidance-oriented emotions that cause difficulties in the implementation of intentions. Exogenous variables, such as the perceptions of resource availability, the removal of inhibiting factors, or new opportunities, may also have an effect on the relationship between intentions and behaviour (Shapero, 1982; Krueger, 2008; Moghavvemi et al., 2015).

3. Research methods

3.1. The Centro Region of Portugal

The case study region is the Centro Region (NUT II) of Portugal, covering a heterogeneous territory, located between the Douro and Tagus rivers (Fig. 1). It represents about 30% of the country’s surface and approximately 22% of the resident Portuguese population. It’s a region of low population density (79.1 inhabitants per km²) and one of the two Portuguese regions that has lost population in the last 25 years. The region has deep natural and demographic contrasts: On one side, the Atlantic coastline, social and economically dynamic, and on the other side the rural interior, marked by progressive abandonment and aging population. As highlighted by Gama et al. (2014) 68 of the 100 municipalities in the region have lost population between 2001 and 2011. The sharpest decreases (above 10%) took place in the municipalities of the interior, particularly in those nearest the Spanish boarder, deepening the phenomenon of depopulation in these territories. In contrast, the population increased in the municipalities located on the coastline, during the same period. Currently more than ¾ of the inhabitants of the Central Region live in a coastal area or near the coast.

In the past, rural territories overlapped with agriculture and forest areas. Nowadays, like most regions in the country, agricultural and forestry activities only partially occupy the rural space. Agricultural production systems are now more productive and need less area and less labour. Forest areas have been expanding but are disconnected from the livelihoods of the rural people. As pointed out by Baptista (1993, 2011, 2018), agriculture and forestry no longer unify the rural society with the territory. On the central coast, it is the industrial and service activities that structure the economic activity of the rural population, especially the activities related to the construction sectors and education, health and public administration services. In low-density territories, with an aging population, retirement pensions are the main source of income for households. Tourism initiatives are also multiplying, highlighting the unique combination of landscapes and historical heritage of this territory (Marques, 2016).

However, although tourism demand has been increasing in the region, tourism activity is still small in comparison to the rest of the country. According to Statistics Portugal (2017), the Central Region represents 15.9%, 11.3% and 8.1%, of the number of guests, nights spent and lodging income, respectively. Tourism in Portugal is still highly concentrated in the southern coastal areas, strongly dependent on sun and beach tourism (Eusébio et al. (2017) and, more recently, in urban areas, predominantly in the main cities of Lisbon and Oporto. In fact, Lisbon, North (Oporto region) and Algarve (the main sun and beach Portuguese tourism region) account for 70% of the stays and



Fig. 1. Central Region map.

74.4% of the lodge income (Statistics Portugal, 2017). Besides, a lot of tourists that visit the Central Region do not stay for long, because the region is not usually the main destination of tourists. On average, each tourist stays in 1.8 nights, against 2.7 for the whole country and 4.6 for Algarve. It is mainly a passing destination, where specific points such as the city of Coimbra, the Sanctuary of Fatima or the Monastery of Batalha are visited (Eusébio et al., 2008). In particular, visitors seeking protected areas and rural immersion are mainly Portuguese, with low levels of qualification and income, that make short trips and group trips (Eusébio et al., 2008).

The perception that the contribution of tourism to the regional economy is far below what its available resources would allow, raises the need to develop efforts in order to promote greater attractiveness for tourists. Tourism and leisure activities are seen not only as strategic but even as priorities for local and regional development, by local authorities, policy makers, development agents and local communities, particularly in low-density areas, taking advantage of the richness and diversity of the endogenous resources (Cunha, 2003; CCDRC, 2014; Marques, 2016; Correia and Homem, 2018). Although the major attraction in the Central Region is religious and mountain tourism (Andraz et al., 2015), the region has great potential for the development of other types of tourist products, such as cultural tourism, health tourism, nature tourism, rural tourism and adventure tourism (Eusébio et al., 2008).

3.2. Data collection

The data collection was mainly based on a survey of Rural Tourism accommodation managers held in 2016 using a fully structured questionnaire administered online. The link to the questionnaire was sent to 326 rural tourism lodgement managers in the Central Region, more precisely to all of those that were registered in the National Register of Tourist Enterprises and had valid and registered e-mails in the database of the Regional Tourism Entity of Central Portugal, on January 1, 2016. In order to increase the response rate, several personal or phone contacts were made along the survey period, informing potential participants about the research and the objectives of the survey. In total, 110 valid questionnaires were received and used in the analysis. The questionnaire was organized in four main groups of questions: 1) the first group focused on the description of the lodging, including identification, history and operational structure; 2) another group was dedicated to the availability of complementary services for tourists, supplied in the lodgement or in partnership with other firms, including the accessibility to local farms, craftsmen and traditional products; 3) another set of questions was divided between the motivations and expectations of managers seeking to understand the reasons why they invested in the lodgement, their satisfaction with the results and how they perceive the future of their business; 4) a final set of questions gathered information about the manager, namely gender, age, educational background, and training and experience in tourism. The main descriptive statistics of the lodgement features and manager

Table 1
Descriptive statistics.^a

| | Mean | S.D. | Min. | Máx. |
|---|-------|------|------|------|
| Lodgement features | | | | |
| Age (years) | 6.14 | 6.95 | 0 | 40 |
| Location in the coast line | 0.200 | | 0 | 1 |
| Number of beds | 12.5 | 7.8 | 3 | 56 |
| Number of hired workers | 1.3 | 1.9 | 0 | 12 |
| Investment can be recovered | 0.236 | | 0 | 1 |
| Complementary services | | | | |
| Traditional/local products selling | 0.296 | | 0 | 1 |
| Partnership with local businesses | 0.727 | | 0 | 1 |
| Motivation for entrepreneurship | | | | |
| Family assets recovery | 0.245 | | 0 | 1 |
| Income generation from unused buildings | 0.672 | | 0 | 1 |
| Additional income earning | 0.336 | | 0 | 1 |
| Creation of personal/family employment | 0.236 | | 0 | 1 |
| Interaction with people from other cultures | 0.454 | | 0 | 1 |
| Promote local development | 0.600 | | 0 | 1 |
| Others | 0.218 | | 0 | 1 |
| Manager characteristics | | | | |
| Owner | 0.836 | | 0 | 1 |
| Lives in the lodgement | 0.373 | | 0 | 1 |
| Have another professional activity | 0.691 | 12.4 | 0 | 1 |
| Male gender | 0.564 | | 0 | 1 |
| Age (years) | 51.7 | | 22 | 78 |
| Education Level | | | | |
| < 9 years | 0.054 | | 0 | 1 |
| 10–12 Years | 0.218 | | 0 | 1 |
| Higher Education | 0.727 | | 0 | 1 |
| Training or experience in tourism or management | 0.436 | | 0 | 1 |

^a For binary variables the mean corresponds to relative frequency; standard deviations are omitted.

characteristics are displayed in [Table 1](#).

The sample is composed of relatively recent small lodgements ranging from 3 to 56 beds and employing 1.9 hired workers on average. Only 23% have already achieved or expect to achieve investment recovery. 20% are located in a coastline municipality, according to the [Eurostat \(2011\)](#) definition, and 80% inland, mostly in the Serra da Estrela Region ([Fig. 2](#)). It may seem imbalanced that 25% of the participants in the survey are located in three municipalities of NUT III “Beiras e Serra da Estrela.” However, these 3 municipalities represent in fact 23% of the rural lodgement in the entire Central Region. Most of them have partnerships with local businesses but only 30% offer local products to guests in their facilities. The main motivations for entrepreneurship were to get some income from unused buildings and to promote rural employment and development. The great majority of the managers are the owners of the lodgement but only a few live there. For nearly 70% of the owners, rural hosting is a secondary activity. These results confirm the findings by [Lane and Kastenholz \(2015\)](#) showing that local connectivity and embeddedness, are frequently absent in small rural tourism units, hindering synergies with other local actors and jeopardizing their contribution to local development.

The managers are mainly men with an average age of 51.7 years. Most of them have a higher degree of education but less than half had previous training or professional experience in tourism or management. Although there is some available data showing that in Portugal rural tourism units are small (with an average number of beds of 17.36 in 2016), the absence of available disaggregated data on rural tourism lodgements in the Central Region, hinders the demonstration of the sample's representativeness. Nevertheless, regarding the sample size, we expect that the answers truly reflect the population's behaviour.

3.3. Variables and model

As stated in the introduction and section 2.3, the theoretical framework of the present study is the Theory of Planned Behaviour proposed by [Ajzen \(1985, 1991\)](#) and [Triandis \(1980\)](#), which suggests that

intentions are the most important predictor of behaviour, although external factors may affect actual behaviour and inhibit an intended action. Using an empirical model, this research seeks to understand if the intention of rural tourism lodgement entrepreneurs to promote local development turned into tangible actions and also to discover the main factors, besides intention, that promoted these actions.

To begin with, it was necessary to find a dependent variable that could behave as a proxy for “behaviour toward local development.” The challenge was to select good viable quality indicators (with relevance and analytical soundness, consistent with the theoretical framework and data accuracy) to be used in the design of a composite measure that could efficiently describe that behaviour. Besides direct job creation, two main dimensions are cited in the literature as potential contributions of small rural tourism units to local sustainable development ([Jaafar et al., 2015](#)): 1) the involvement in the growth of supplementary sources of income to local farms and crafts, including high quality local food; 2) the impact in new rural business creation. In this particular case, direct job creation is not an interesting dependent variable since the number of employees depends more on the size of the lodgement and on the investment ability of the promoters than on their intentions regarding local development. Therefore, the dimension “jobs creation” was dropped in the construct of the dependent variable. The dimension “contribution to local products valorisation” it was measured by the presence or absence of such products in the Rural Tourism units. As stated by [Kastenholz et al. \(2016\)](#), local product purchases are particularly important in stimulating rural economies, both directly and indirectly through the generation of multiplier effects. Consumption of local products directly stimulates local trade, providing additional income to communities and employment. Being produced locally, with local resources, lower leakages are generated and correspondingly higher benefits are seized by the local economy. Besides the consumption of local goods, particularly food and drinks, may enhance sustainable agricultural practices, supporting local business and building a “brand” that can benefit the region by attracting more visitors. Local products contribute to a favourable destination image in the mind of tourists, who might want to consume these products after returning home, increasing local exports and the overall benefits of tourism for the destination. Findings of the empirical study by [Kastenholz et al. \(2016\)](#) show that local products represent a high proportion of the global expenditures made by tourists during their stay, suggesting a significant role of local product purchases in stimulating rural economies. The authors suggest that it would be wise to increase foreigners' contact with local products, for example, in accommodation units. In the present study, the presence of local products was acknowledged whenever the lodgement provided a continuous supply of such products, whether in small shops owned by the same owners or in the meals served at the unit. Several types of products were identified with emphasis on wine and liquors, bread, cheese, jam, vegetables and fruits.

Regarding the contribution of accommodation units to the development of other rural businesses, it is well known that linkages with other local actors is an important tool for stimulating local economies, by generating a higher level of general business activity, retaining tourism earnings in the region, and improving the distribution of tourism benefits within the community ([Torres, 2003](#)). When tourism entrepreneurs use local businesses and culture in their own business, they also play a role in the strengthening of local identity and pride ([Brandth et al., 2013](#)). In this study the dimension “role of accommodation units in the development of other rural business” was assessed by the existence of partnerships with local suppliers of complementary activities. These activities mainly include recreational services, such as horse rides, water sports, walking tours, provided by other local entrepreneurs.

To define the dependent variable used in the model, the two dimensions (“contribution to local products valorisation” and “role of accommodation units in the development of other rural business”) were

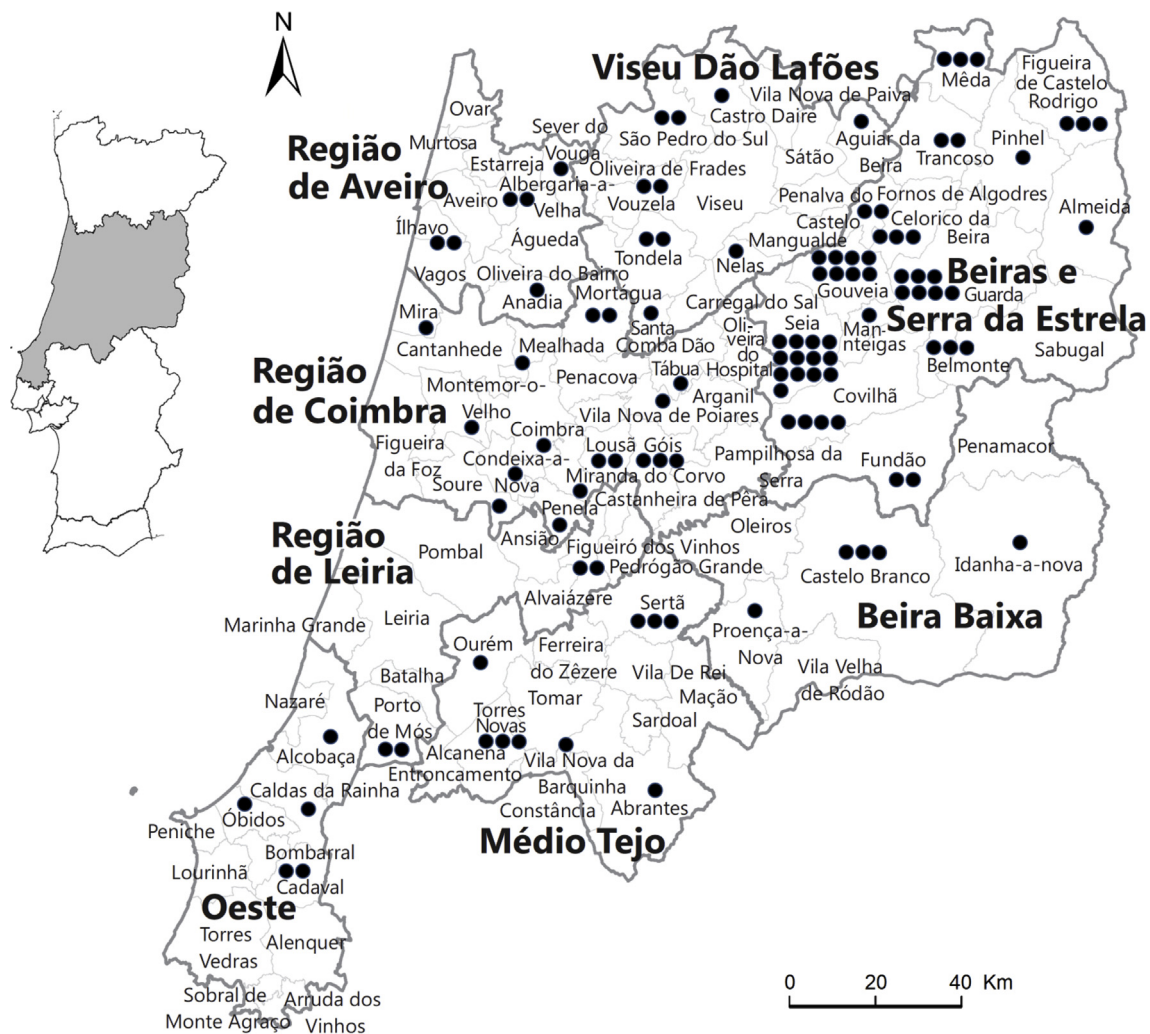


Fig. 2. Location of the participants in the survey (each dot corresponds to one participant).

joined in a proxy variable – *Development* – which takes the value 1 if both local products and complementary activities are available for guests in the rural tourism unit, and 0 otherwise.

To study the impact of intentions on the behaviour of rural tourism hosts towards local development, the motivations of rural tourism entrepreneurs to start their businesses were analysed. Whenever the entrepreneurs stated that local development was one of the main reasons why they start their business, the value 1 was given to the dependent variable *Intention*. If the participants did not mention local development as a reason for entrepreneurship, the value 0 was assigned to the variable. Since rural development may possess a subjective meaning, that differs between individuals, the major features that participants relate with rural development were further investigated. Whenever the participants stated that rural development was a major reason for entrepreneurship, they were asked, by an open ended question, how they perceive the contribution of their business to rural development. The answers were then grouped in several dimensions. The ones that were mentioned by more than half of the respondents were “local goods and services demand increase” (67,5%), “built heritage conservation” (62,3%), “local traditions, local products and cultural identity preservation” (59,7%), “job creation” (58,4%) and “local resources valorisation by local people” (53,2%). Although the dependent variable *Development* does not include some of the social dimensions referred to by the participants, it includes the main socio-economic aspects: increased demand of local goods and services and preservation of local traditions and products. In fact, the preservation of local traditions

surpasses the economic dimension, becoming an important contribution for the preservation of cultural heritage. These results validate the dependent variable, whose construction was mainly based on literature.

Since in small businesses, decision making is often an extension of the owner-manager’s personality and characteristics, other independent variables were included in the model in order to control for rural tourism unit features, and manager demographic characteristics and to allow a better understanding of the main factors that condition the adoption of local development practices by rural tourism accommodation managers, beside intentions. In Table 2, all variables used in the model are presented in a systematic way.

The first group of independent variables contains four variables related to the rural tourism unit’s features: lodgement age, measured by the start-up year; business performance, measured by the manager perspectives on investment recovery; size, measured by the number of beds; and service intensity, measured by the number of workers per bed. Lodgement age is an important variable since, as stated by Fayolle and Liñán (2014), the way entrepreneurial intentions lead to behaviours are affected by temporalities, since entrepreneurs have to deal with many interrelated events and processes, each with different time demands. Entrepreneurial goal intentions may change over time and, at the same time, third variables can change or come into play. As a result, the relationships between the initially measured constructs and the outcome may become weaker (Gielnik et al., 2014). One of the variables that can change over time is the business economic performance, influencing the strength of the relationship between initial intentions

Table 2
Variables description.

| Variable | Description |
|---|--|
| Dependent Variable | |
| Development | Takes the value 1 if both traditional products and complementary activities are available for guests, and 0 otherwise |
| Independent variables | |
| Intention | Takes the value 1 if respondents state that local development was one of his/her starting motivations and the value 0 otherwise. |
| Lodgement features | |
| Year | Start-up year |
| Performance | Business performance; takes the value 1 if the investment was already recovered or if the manager expects it will be possible to recover it and the value 0 otherwise. |
| NrBeds | Number of beds |
| Workbed | Number of workers per bed |
| Coastline | Location; Takes the value 1 for coastline municipalities and the value 0 otherwise |
| Manager socio-demographic characteristics | |
| Gender | Takes the value 1 for male and the value 0 for female |
| Age | Age of the respondent, measured in years |
| Education | Takes the value 1 if the manager has a university degree and the value 0 otherwise. |
| Experience | Manager past experience or training in the fields of tourism or management; takes the value 1 when the manager has had experience and 0 otherwise. |
| Residence | Takes the value 1 when the respondent lives in the rural tourism unit and the value 0 otherwise. |

and actual behaviour. The size and intensity of the business were included as explanatory variables because, as pointed out by Douglas (2013), larger firms have more restrictions to the manager's decision-making autonomy. Restrictions may arrive from investors and bankers, large customers and/or large suppliers, labour unions, workplace health and safety organizations, and rival firms. Furthermore, the average quality of interaction with individual stakeholders is likely to decline with size and the probability of conflict with these stakeholders might be expected to increase (Douglas, 2013). This last idea is particularly relevant in the present study since the dependent variable is based on the interactions between local hosts and the community.

Welter and Smallbone (2012) points out that economic behaviour can be better understood in its specific framework, including the institutional, spatial and social contexts. Regarding the tourism sector, there is empirical evidence (Zasada and Piore, 2015) that measures variables oriented towards tourism development and village renewal that shows a strong responsiveness to framework conditions, especially to the rural community characteristics. In this line, since the Central Region is a region with high contrasts between the coastline and the interior municipalities, the inclusion of a variable that could express the role of the local framework conditions in the engagement in local development was mandatory. Using as reference the Eurostat (2011) definition of coastline region, the dichotomous variable *Coastline* was build, separating lodgements located in coastline regions from lodgements located in interior regions.

Several studies have shown that socio-demographic characteristics may affect entrepreneurial intentions (e.g. Douglas, 2013). Age, gender, education and skills in financial management, accounting and marketing are characteristics that may determine managerial behaviour and leadership style (Cooper et al., 1994; Robinson and Sexton, 1994; Lerner and Haber, 2000; Minett et al., 2009) and affect the emotions correlated with the implementation of intentions (Van Gelderen et al., 2015). Education and training may significantly affect an entrepreneur's practices, not only because they provide essential business skills, but also because they provide learning and networking skills (Bosworth and Atterton, 2012) which facilitate extra local connectivity, one of the most important ingredients for local development, along with embeddedness. Taking this into account, a second group of variables related to manager characteristics (gender, age, education and experience) were included. Another variable (residence) was also integrated in order to capture the effect of embeddedness in the adoption of local development practices by local hosts. The variable residence distinguishes managers who live in the rural tourism unit from those that do not. The idea is that, by living in the territory, managers will more easily become part of the local community.

3.4. Estimation procedures

The estimation method used was logistic regression with 95% confidence intervals for estimated coefficients. A logit or logistic regression is a multivariate technique that allows one to estimate the impact of each explanatory variable on the probability of an event (Long and Freese, 2006). Binary dependent variables have two values, typically coded as 0 for a negative outcome (i.e., the local host does not act in order to enhance local development) and 1 for positive outcome (i.e., the local host acts in order to enhance local development). The probability that a local host acts in order to enhance local development is given by the expression, where \exp is the base of natural logarithms, α is the constant of the equation and βx are the coefficients vector of the explanatory variables. These types of models have been widely applied in empirical research. For a good understanding of the issues involving estimation, fitting and interpreting regression models with binary outcomes we suggest Long and Freese (2006). The estimation was carried out using the STATA 15 software package.

4. Results and discussion

The estimation results are shown in Table 3. The estimated coefficients are presented in the second column and the marginal effects of the independent variables (dy/dx) appear in the fourth. Marginal effects for all independent variables were evaluated at their mean. The model proved to be quite stable since removing specific variables or

Table 3
Estimation results.

| Variables | Coeffic. | Std. Err | dy/dx | z | P > z |
|---------------|----------|----------|--------|-------|--------|
| Intention*** | 1.688 | 0.597 | 0.261 | 2.83 | 0.005 |
| Year | 0.004 | 0.040 | 0.001 | 0.09 | 0.929 |
| Performance** | 1.426 | 0.601 | 0.287 | 2.37 | 0.018 |
| NrBeds | 0.023 | 0.299 | 0.004 | 0.76 | 0.449 |
| Workbed | -1.750 | 2.073 | -0.298 | -0.84 | 0.399 |
| Coastline** | -1.515 | 0.760 | -0.197 | -1.99 | 0.046 |
| Gender | 0.154 | 0.509 | 0.026 | 0.30 | 0.763 |
| Age | 0.005 | 0.023 | 0.001 | 0.23 | 0.818 |
| Education** | 1.511 | 0.675 | 0.211 | 2.24 | 0.025 |
| Experience** | 1.332 | 0.559 | 0.236 | 2.38 | 0.017 |
| Residence* | 1.021 | 0.594 | 0.186 | 1.72 | 0.086 |
| Constant | -12.065 | 81.770 | - | -0.15 | 0.883 |

LR chi2(11) = 24.13 Prob > chi2 = 0.0122.

Pseudo R2 = 0.1872 Log likelihood = -52.388.

***p-value < 0.01; **p-value < 0.05; *p-value < 0.1.

For dummy variables dy/dx represents the change in the dependent variable as a result of the discrete change from 0 to 1 in the explanatory variable.

Table 4
Evaluation of the logistic regression (classification table).

| Classified | True | | Total |
|------------|------|----|-------|
| | D | ~D | |
| + | 12 | 6 | 18 |
| - | 18 | 74 | 92 |
| Total | 30 | 80 | 110 |

| Classified + if predicted $\Pr(D) \geq .5$ True D defined as Development ! = 0 | | |
|---|-----------------|--------|
| Sensitivity | $\Pr(+ D)$ | 40.00% |
| Specificity | $\Pr(- \sim D)$ | 92.50% |
| Positive predictive value | $\Pr(D +)$ | 66.67% |
| Negative predictive value | $\Pr(\sim D -)$ | 80.43% |
| False + rate for true ~D | $\Pr(+ \sim D)$ | 7.50% |
| False - rate for true D | $\Pr(- D)$ | 60.00% |
| False + rate for classified + | $\Pr(\sim D +)$ | 33.33% |
| False - rate for classified - | $\Pr(D -)$ | 19.57% |
| Correctly classified | | 78.18% |

observations did not seriously affect the value of the coefficients or changed their signal. The test of the full model against a constant, using LR chi2 (11), was statistically significant for $p < 0.0122$, indicating that the predictors reliably distinguished between “behaviour towards local development” and “behaviour disregarding local development.”

Other integrity of fit tests were also applied after estimation, showing no reasons to believe that the model does not fit well (Hosmer-Lemeshow chi square = 112.02; Prob > chi square = 0.1576). In Table 4, where D and ~D stands for “behaviour towards local development” and “behaviour disregarding local development,” respectively, it is possible to see that prediction success overall was 78.18%.

As displayed in Table 1, 60% of the participants declared that the promotion of local development was one of the main reasons why they started their business. However, only 27.3% of respondents were shown to be engaged in actions towards rural development (*Development* = 1), supporting the hypothesis of an intention-behaviour gap. The existence of inhibiting factors such as the absenteeism of the owners as well as their dedication to other professional activities may help to explain this gap. The linkages with the local economy depends on an entrepreneur's embeddedness and the establishment of lasting partnerships with local producers is a time consuming task. Besides, along with rural development, entrepreneurs had other initial motivations such as the recovery and valorisation of unused buildings that may generate conflictual constraints, acting against rural development actions. The fact that in more than 75% of the lodgements, the initial investment was not already recovered and the managers do not expect it will be possible to recover, is also a constraint that may have cause the abandonment of initial intentions.

Nevertheless, the proportion of those who adopt a behaviour towards local development is significantly ($p < 0.05$) higher (34.8%) in the group of respondents who state that local development was one of their starting motivations than in the group who did not (15.9%), suggesting that intentions probably explain at least a part of actual behaviour. In fact, from the estimation results we can conclude that the intention to promote local development have a strong and significant effect on the probability that small rural tourism hosts will, in fact, adopt a behaviour towards local development. Looking at this outcome in more detail, it is possible to conclude that, other things remaining constant, local hosts that had the intention to promote local development when they started their business are 26% more likely to adopt local development practices than others. These results are in line with those of Armitage and Conner (2001) who found in a meta-analytic review of 185 studies, using the theory of planned behaviour, that behavioural intentions explain 27% of the variance in behaviour.

The other exogenous variables with significant effect on the probability of adoption of local development practices are: *Performance*,

Coastline, *Education*, *Experience* and, in the limit of statistical significance, *Residence*. The probability of adoption of practices compatible with local development increases 28.7% when comparing local hosts that have recovered their investment, or expect to do so, with those that have not. This means that, all other things being equal, rural tourism units that achieve a good economic and financial performance become more willing to connect with the local food production and local tourism animation businesses, playing a double role in the promotion of local development.

Not surprisingly, tourism units located on the coastline are less likely to offer traditional products and to provide complementary activities to guests. Holding other things constant, the probability that a rural tourism unit offers these kinds of goods and services is 19.7% lower in the coastline than in interior areas. Traditional food products are usually connected with extensive agricultural production which, as pointed out by Zasada and Piorr (2015), citing several authors (Tobias et al., 2005; Piorr et al., 2006; Hart et al., 2011), tends to prevail in locations with less-productive conditions, such as mountainous areas or areas with low soil fertility, much more common in the interior areas of the Central Region than on the coastline. On the other hand, regarding complementary activities, most rural tourism units on the coastline are located close to cities (Coimbra, Aveiro, Leiria) and beaches where tourists can find a wide variety of entertainment activities, being less dependent on the hosts' offers and suggestions.

Regarding the manager socio-demographic characteristics it is clear that managers with a university degree and past experience or training in the fields of tourism or management tend to be more involved with the local socio-economic fabric, since the probability that they sell traditional products in their rural tourism units and provide complementary activities to guests is higher than that of other managers. Finally, with a smaller statistical significance ($p = 0.086$), the residence of the manager also emerges as an important factor in the explanation of attitudes. Other things remaining constant, when the manager lives in the rural tourism unit the probability of adoption of a behaviour towards local development, increases 18.6%, probably because the presence of the managers, enhances embeddedness and favours the access to local information and networks.

5. Conclusions

The alleged importance of tourism for local development, widely present in the political and academic discourse, has been captured by rural tourism entrepreneurs, who have incorporated the intention to promote rural development into their own motivations for starting a business. Nevertheless, once in business, a lot of them do not actually engage in development-promoting actions, lending credence to what is called the intention behaviour gap. The empirical findings of this study corroborate the idea that intentions are important but insufficient to explain behaviour. Other factors such as location, business success and manager's connection with the community, help to explain the adoption of local development practices. The level of education of managers as well as their past experience or training in the fields of tourism or management also influence the role played by rural tourism units in local development.

The study provides useful information to planners and policy makers because the knowledge of the factors that are critical in the contribution of rural tourism units to rural revitalization, allows the design of more effective public policies and financial mechanisms for supporting rural development and tourism. It is clear that the motivation to promote rural development has an important role in the effective adoption of pro-development practices. Therefore, the training of potential rural tourism entrepreneurs on the competitive advantages that can arise for local businesses and communities from the adoption of such practices could enhance the contribution of small hosts to rural communities well-being and to the desirable ‘variety’ of the local economy. Regarding policy making, rural tourism support programs

could be more successful if the eligibility criteria would benefit entrepreneurs that live in the community, since their contribution to rural development is more evident. The same happens with entrepreneurs' training and experience.

The findings of this study also contribute to the tourism and local development literature by exploring the intention-behaviour gap, regarding the adoption of local development practices by small rural tourism units, and by identifying factors that limit their potential in delivering benefits to rural communities. Besides the effect of intentions, the study measures the impact of internal and external factors on the adoption of a particular behaviour, providing new insights into the conditions faced by entrepreneurs, when deciding to promote local development. Most studies employing intention models of entrepreneurial behaviour have mainly focused on explaining intention, paying less attention to the relationship between the early intentions and the actual practices of entrepreneurs.

Confictual business and personal goals probably are at the heart of the intention behaviour gap. Besides rural development, a variety of starting objectives are mentioned by the unit's owners, in particular to increase value of old abandoned buildings and family assets. This behaviour was encouraged by public policies implemented at the end of the last century, designed to support previously constructed heritage recovery. Core economic reasons, such as promotion of self-employment or income, are much less relevant, hampering the need for a strong connectivity with the local economy. At the same time most of the owners are absent from the tourism units and have other jobs, probably devoting a small amount of resources (time and money) to develop strong ties with the local socio-economic fabric.

Like in every empirical study, several limitations of the present research must be mentioned. First of all, intentions were collected retrospectively, with participants being asked to recall their motivations when they started their business, which may entail a significant recall error in reference to the past. A direct, long-term longitudinal approach would be better. However, this approach would imply a long run study with prohibitive costs. The indirect approach that was used relies on the respondent's memory of when they formed their intentions, assuming that respondents reasonably remember their earlier intentions. Additionally, the dependent variable only combined two mainly socio-economic aspects of rural development, leaving behind the environmental dimension of sustainable development. Although the selected aspects are among the most cited in the literature and are also identified by the participants in the empirical study as being relevant to promote rural development, the construction of a more comprehensive dependent variable would give more confidence in the results. A further limitation is the specific location of the survey and the relatively small sample size which hinder the transfer of the results and conclusions to other settings. Even though, this study represents a relevant starting point to understand the impact of intentions and other factors in the adoption of local development practices by rural tourism hosts, particularly in more peripheral regions. Future research could expand the findings presented in this study in order to better clarify at what point in their path and what events cause owners of small, rural tourism units to lose their motivation to contribute to local development.

Appendix A. Supplementary data

Supplementary data to this article can be found online at <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jrurstud.2019.10.002>.

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