

**YEAR 2016-2017**

**BACHELOR DEGREE IN TOURISM AND HOSPITALITY MANAGEMENT**

**SUBJECT: Undergraduate Dissertation**

**SEMESTER: 7**

**TITLE OF ASSIGNMENT:**

**“How is seasonality affecting rural accommodation in La Selva and how are they managing it?”**

<b>Student Name</b>	Berta Oriol
<b>Student ID no.</b>	13283
<b>E-mail address (HTSI)</b>	berta.oriol@aluhtsi.url.edu
<b>Lecturer</b>	Emili Valdero
<b>Lecturer E-mail address (HTSI)</b>	emili.valdero@htsi.url.edu

## Abstract

The following research paper aims to identify how seasonality impacts rural accommodation in la Selva and to analyse how it is managed. The intention of the study is to develop a case study in la Selva to identify how rural accommodation is impacted by seasonality and how do they deal with this phenomenon.

For the development of this case study was chosen a qualitative method approach as interviews from rural establishments owners were taken in order to get to know how theories and methods are applied and carried out in practice and to analyse how do they face the seasonal phenomenon and which measures do they implement. The results showed that rural establishments in la Selva are impacted negatively by seasonality. Another interesting finding is that the main method they use to manage seasonality is the differential pricing strategy; nevertheless, it is not providing significant improvements to their business performance. On the other hand, interviewees mentioned that their lack of specific knowledge in hospitality management makes them difficult to take further actions. Consequently, the study shows that rural accommodation should consider promoting the elderly and the young market as a way to deseasonalise the rural tourism demand. Furthermore, it is also recommended to organize some workshops for the rural establishments owners to train them in how to deal with seasonality and to show them the different approaches and strategies available to overcome this phenomenon.

## Acknowledgments

First and foremost, I wish to express my sincere thanks to my academic supervisor Emili Valdero, for providing me with the necessary material for the research, for his knowledge and his continuous encouragement.

I am also grateful to Katharine d'Amico for helping me with her valuable guidance and support in my writing skills.

And finally, I take this opportunity to express gratitude to the rural establishments for their collaboration during the research and their support.

Berta Oriol Agell

Student of HTSI Tourism and Hospitality Sant Ignasi

## Table of contents

Abstract .....	I
Acknowledgments .....	II
1. Chapter 1. Introduction .....	1
1.1 Context of the research problem .....	1
1.2 Identification of the research problem .....	3
1.3 Originality and contribution to knowledge .....	3
1.4 Research aim and objectives .....	3
2. Chapter 2. Literature .....	4
2.1 Literature review .....	4
2.1.1 Rural tourism .....	4
2.1.2 Seasonality in tourism .....	7
2.1.3 Seasonality Management .....	8
2.2 Literature map .....	11
2.3 Conceptual framework .....	12
3. Chapter 3. Methods .....	13
3.1 Overall research design .....	13
3.2 Data collection techniques and research instruments .....	13
3.3 Research context and participants .....	14
3.4 Data analysis .....	17
3.5 Ethical Considerations .....	18
4. Chapter 4. Findings and discussion .....	19
5. Chapter 5. Conclusions .....	25
5.1 Conclusions .....	25
5.2 Recommendations .....	26
5.3 Limitations and further Research .....	26

References.....	27
Appendices:.....	31

List of figures:

Figure 1 Seasonality of rural reservations in Spain .....	2
Figure 2 Literature map.....	11
Figure 3 Conceptual framework.....	12
Figure 4 Location of the selected rural establishments .....	15
Figure 5 Information sheet and consent form .....	18
Figure 6 Ethics Form.....	43

List of tables:

Table 1 Classification Rural Tourism Allotments in Catalunya .....	6
Table 2 Strategies to address seasonality impacts.....	9
Table 3 Summary of the interviews .....	21

## 1. Chapter 1. Introduction

### 1.1 Context of the research problem

Seasonality is one of the most singular features of the global tourism industry. This phenomenon is caused by the concentration of the influx of travellers in certain months; therefore, some destinations receive too many tourists and visitors at certain times while at other times there are too few tourists in the region (Corluka, G., n.d.). This phenomenon has been regarded as a major problem which needs to be overcome since it impacts on all aspects of the supply behaviour including marketing, the labour market, the business finance, the stakeholder management and all aspects of operations (Baum, T. and Lundtorp, S., 2001).

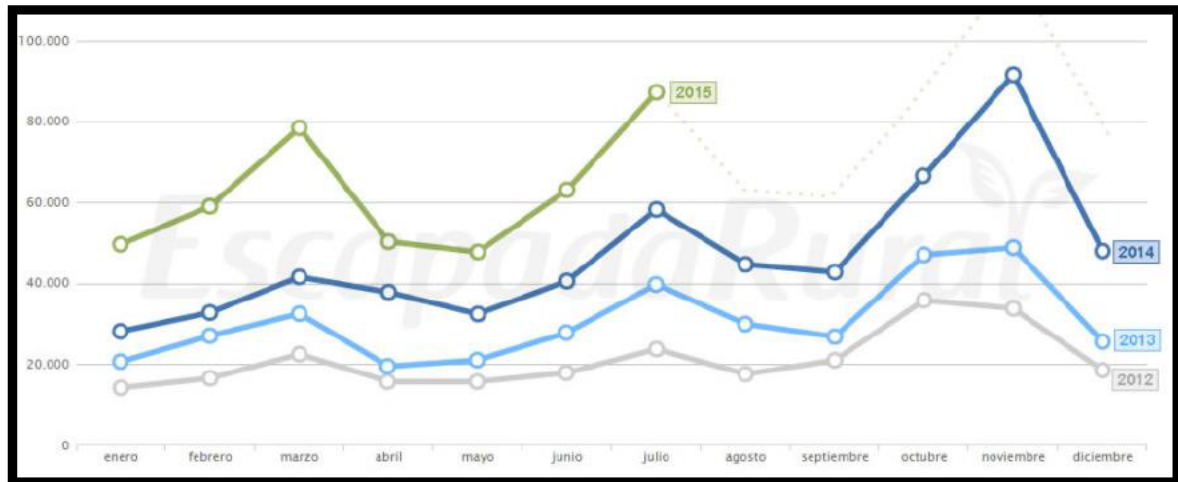
Regarding the origins of seasonality, natural factors play an important role upon destinations. For this reason; the main cause of seasonality uses to depend strongly on the local weather and climate. This means that tourists prefer to travel during the months with best weather which for the most developed countries is usually in summer. This is the reason why one of the most vulnerable and studied sectors is the beach tourism (Cannas, R., 2012).

Nonetheless, there is another sector which is overlooked when analysing seasonality: the rural tourism. There are just a few studies focused in rural tourism, however, it has been detected that seasonality is a major problem in rural tourism since their sales are concentrated on the Easter holidays, Summer and New Year's Eve (CETT, 2015).

Concerning rural tourism, Spain is one of the European countries with highest number of overnight stays in rural localities. In fact, it is estimated that Spain has more than 15.000 rural lodgings and hosted in 2015 a total of 1.6 million of travellers which represented the 2% of the country's overnight stays (WeblogTurismo, 2016). When analysing the seasonality effects in rural tourism in Spain, has been found that a 52.7% out of 2.000 survey respondents determined that seasonality is the primary concern in rural tourism in this country, together with the oversupply and the unfair competition (Observatorio de Turismo Rural, 2015). As it is shown on the chart below, demand has experienced a positive overall progression in Spain, but it accuses some peaks and low-demand periods at certain times of the year which means that there are still great variations between different periods of the year. We can see that in Spain the months of January, April-March and August-September are the months with the worst figures, while March, July and November represent a notable increase in the number reservations. This means

that in Spain the favourite moments to make rural tourism are during Easter, Christmas and Summer holidays.

Figure 1 Seasonality of rural reservations in Spain



Source: Observatorio de Turismo Rural (2015)

If we look at the Spanish Autonomous Communities, Catalunya is the second region offering more rural lodgings in Spain with a percentage of 13.3% of the total rural accommodation in Spain. Apart from being one of the communities with more lodgings, it is also one of the regions that most rural travellers receive with a percentage of 15.8% (Clubrural, 2015). Regarding the seasonality effects in rural tourism in Catalunya, it is among the regions with less pronounced seasonality in Spain, however, it still has a very seasonal pattern where the month of November also appears as the peak season (Observatorio de Turismo Rural, 2015). Catalunya is divided in nine tourist brands: Barcelona, Costa Brava, Costa Daurada, Costa Barcelona, Paisatges Barcelona, Pirineus, Terres de Lleida, Terres de l'Ebre & Val d'Aran. The Costa Brava was the second tourist brand (followed by the Pirineus) that offered a larger number of rural tourism establishments and was also one of the brands with a higher occupancy rate in rural tourism during 2016 (Idescat, 2016).

Given that la Costa Brava is the second destination with more rural establishments in Catalunya; will be studied the seasonality impact on rural accommodation in this area. As La Costa Brava is a very extensive area which includes seven Catalan regions: Alt Empordà, Baix Empordà, Gironès, Pla de l'Estany, Garrotxa, Ripollès and La Selva, the research will be focused in the region of La Selva.

## 1.2 Identification of the research problem

As explained before, it has been identified that rural tourism in La Selva is affected by seasonality. For this reason, the following question will be answered throughout this research:

**How is seasonality affecting rural accommodation in La Selva and how are they managing it?**

## 1.3 Originality and contribution to knowledge

There are a lot of studies about seasonality and its impacts on tourism. However, regarding the seasonality effects in rural tourism, there is only a little information available about some regions such as the southern Germany, north Portugal, Canada, Korea, Cyprus, etc. Notwithstanding, no usability tests have still been driven in seasonality in rural tourism in La Selva.

On the other hand, it is possible to find many reports about seasonality in “Sun & Sand” destinations but it is also important to study the rural tourism and how to overcome seasonality. It is necessary to develop this type of tourism and make it grow because it can bring us several advantages such as the diversification of production which leads to a reduced reliance on traditional activities (since it is a complementary activity), it helps compensating the seasonality of agricultural production and employment, it allows creation of employment and it generates an enhancement of cultural heritage (Romero, L., 2007).

## 1.4 Research aim and objectives

The aim of this research is to identify how seasonality impacts rural accommodation in La Selva and to analyse how it is managed. For that purpose, the research objective is the following:

- 1) Develop a case study in la Selva to identify how rural accommodation is impacted by seasonality and how do they deal with it.



## 2. Chapter 2. Literature

### 2.1 Literature review

#### 2.1.1 Rural tourism

Irshad, H. (2010) defined rural tourism as the experience which offers a wide range of attractions and activities that take place in agricultural or non-urban areas. It includes wide open spaces, low levels of tourism development, and opportunities for visitors to directly experience agricultural and/or natural environments.

Rural tourism is an important potential market; however, there are not many research available of this segment so it is difficult to size it. Nonetheless, it is estimated that three per cent of all international tourists travel for rural tourism purposes (WTO, 2004). Even though it is still only a minority tourism market, it is making a valuable contribution to rural economies. It has a lot of benefits such as: job retention, job creation, new business opportunities (not only for the business related directly with tourism but also for other businesses such as restaurants), it creates opportunities for youth (it enhances career options with the opportunities in running tourism businesses), service retention, rural tourism enhances and revitalizes community pride because encourages conformity to an ideal image of community, it preserves the rural culture and heritage, increases arts and landscape conservation,.. (Irshad, H., 2010).

On the other hand, Irshad, H. (2010) also explains that there are three different types of rural tourism:

- Heritage tourism: consist on a leisure travel that its primary purpose is experiencing those places and activities that represent the past.
- Nature-based: those travellers who visit natural areas to enjoy the scenario, the animals and plants.
- Agritourism: consists on visiting working farms or any agribusiness operation with the purpose of enjoyment, education or active involvement in the activities of the farm operation.

All three types of rural tourism mentioned above are characterized as a type of seasonal tourism, which is mainly in summer, weekends, early spring and autumn.

Focusing on Catalunya, it is one of the main tourist regions of Europe and has joined relatively late rural tourism. It is not until the nineties that the Rural tourism starts to grow. It gradually

started positioning itself as a strategic tourism in inland and mountain regions; and thereafter started experiencing a strong growth by rural establishments which demonstrates that tourism is beginning to become a leisure alternative to the sun and beach tourism.

Diputació de Barcelona (2012) explains that in Catalunya are considered rural tourism lodgings those that offer allotment to travellers through the payment of a price. These lodgings should be in a population centre with less than 1.000 inhabitants or out of the city centre, integrated in buildings that existed before 1950 and respecting the architectural history of the area. Those establishments located in flats which are in a building with different floors are not considered rural lodgings.

Rural tourism establishments are classified in two groups:

- Cases de pagès or agriturismo: are those establishments in which the owner or the farmer obtains farm, livestock or forestry income. Users can get to know the tasks and the own activities of the agricultural holding they are linked with.
- Rural accommodation: these are those establishments in which the title holder is not obliged to obtain farm, livestock or forestry income, however, must reside at the same region.

To distinguish these types of allotments, the rural establishments should be signalled with the hallmark "TR". The allotments of the group "cases de pagès or agriturismo" have a sign where it is added "agroturisme".

Gencat (n.d.) established a categorization system for the Catalan rural tourism establishments which is based in "spikes". There exist five categories of rural accommodation:

- Basic: are represented with one spike, these allotments offer indispensable services.
- Comfort: represented by two spikes. They offer a good level of rooms and equipment.
- Great comfort: has three spikes which means they offer very good rooms and equipment.
- Superior level: has four spikes and offers excellent services and a unique environment
- Superior Premium: it is represented by five spikes. They provide an exceptional level of rooms and equipment. They are in emblematic spaces.

Anoiaproject (n.d.) explains that in Catalunya are four different modalities of rural allotments within both Cases de Pagès and Rural accommodation types: Masia, Masoveria, Casa de poble compartida and Casa independent. In the following picture are shown the differences between each modality of establishment:

**Table 1 Classification Rural Tourism Allotments in Catalunya**

		<b>Masia</b>	<b>Masoveria</b>	<b>Casa de poble compartida</b>	<b>Casa Independent</b>
<b>Location</b>	Out of the city centre	X	X		
	In the city centre			X	X
<b>Relation with the title holder</b>	Housing shared with the owner	X		X	
	Housing not shared with the owner		X		X
<b>Type of allotment</b>	Room scheme	X		X	
	Housing scheme		X		X
<b>Diet</b>	Breakfast included	X		X	
	No service		X		X

Source: Own elaboration (2017)

### 2.1.2 Seasonality in tourism

Seasonality is one of the main defining characteristics of global tourism and has been recognized as one of the most relevant aspects of tourism. As defined earlier, it is a temporal imbalance in the phenomenon of tourism which is expressed in receiving too many tourists and visitors at certain times while at other times there are too few tourists in the region (Corluka, G., n.d.). For this reason, the basic tool to measure seasonality is usually the number of visitors (arrivals, departures & staying guests).

There are three basic seasonality patterns: single-peak, two-peak and non-peak seasonality. Single-peak seasonality means that there is an extreme seasonality such as in the beach tourism. Two-peak seasonality occurs when there are two high seasons of tourists coming such as for example the Pyrenees because the region has both summer and winter peaks. Finally, there is the non-peak seasonality that refers to most urban destinations because they have “all year-round use” (Kesidou, O., 2016).

It is also necessary to determine the origins of this phenomenon to better understand this concept so it will be easier to find solutions. Its origins are mainly natural and institutional or also called holiday periods. Natural seasonality is the one related with the climatic conditions which impacts the most in locations close to the polar extremes and tropical regions. Natural seasonality attracts visitors during favoured climatic conditions. On the other hand, regarding institutional seasonality, it is more unpredictable and it consists of the outcome of a combination of religious, cultural, ethnic and social factors (periods of religious worship, school or working holidays...). This type of seasonality coincides with business conferences, rewards trips, festivals, etc. (Baum, T. and Lundtorp, S., 2001).

As it has been previously established, seasonality is the primary concern in rural tourism, for this reason, it will be necessary to identify how seasonality impacts tourism. The seasonality's negative effects can be divided into three categories:

- Employment: there is no job demand in peak-off seasons, so the employment rate decreases
- Environment: environment problems due to overcrowding. Moreover, there could be hostility of locals toward tourism due to negative impact on residents' traditional or cultural social activities

- Economics: there are low annual returns on capital. Due to this instability of revenues, tourism resources have high-risk of underutilization. Furthermore, there is a fear to invest because of this instability.

However, it also presents positive effects from the viewpoints of sociology and ecology because it provides an opportunity for a social and ecological recovery during the peak-offs seasons. It also allows locals to have their “normal life styles back”. (Young Chung, J., 2009).

### 2.1.3 Seasonality Management

There are some methods to reduce these seasonal aspects of tourism mentioned before. There are no strategies to eliminate seasonality but it can be reduced. According to Butler, R., (2001) there are only a few approaches which have been used to overcome seasonality. For instance, trying to diversify markets, using differential pricing and tax incentives on a temporal basis (this means offering special price offers), make group booking offers, encouraging domestic tourism in off-seasons, and providing off-seasons attractions such as festivals, congresses, etc.

The elderly and the young market could be promoted for their capacity to deseasonalise the rural tourism demand. Another measure could be creating different products, not just one, to have a minimum occupancy throughout the year such as culinary and adventure activities. Doing marketing campaigns and promotions are also necessary in order to face this problem (Hosteltur, n.d.).

Kesidou, O., (2016) mentioned that there are four principal strategies for managing seasonality: changing the product mix, market diversification, differential pricing and encouragement/facilitation by the state of the staggering of holidays. Right below in the table 2 are shown the different types of strategies to address seasonality impacts:

Table 2 Strategies to address seasonality impacts

Cited in	Strategy	Issue addressed
<b>1. Differential pricing</b>		
Commons & Page (2001); Jang (2004); Jeffrey & Barden (1999); Witt & Moutinho (1995)	Seasonal (or promotional) pricing such as discount or free offers	Increasing visitation in low periods. Increasing length of stay. High prices to decrease congestion in peak season
Jeffrey & Barden (1999)	Group booking offers (retirees)	Increasing visitation in low periods
Jeffrey & Barden (1999)	Financial planning and budgeting to manage fluctuating operational costs (employees and other resources) based on cyclical trends	Inability to control fluctuating seasonal costs
Butler (2001)	Closure of business in off-peak season	Reduction of operational costs
<b>2. Diversified attraction</b>		
Goulding, Baum & Morrison (2004); Witt & Moutinho (1995)	Introduction of development of festivals and events	Increasing visitation in low periods
Goulding, Baum & Morrison (2004)	Development of the local environment (access to restricted natural attractions)	Increasing visitation in low periods
Goulding, Baum & Morrison (2004)	Facility or structural development such as public transport & amenities	Increasing visitation in low periods
Goulding, Baum & Morrison (2004)	Service level differentiation (reducing opening times in low season)	Reducing costs, increasing yield. Meeting customer needs.
Goulding, Baum & Morrison (2004); Jeffrey & Barden (1999)	Offering complementary services or themed offers (e.g. combining tourist facility with local amenities – motel with coffee shops or retail outlets)	Expanding operational season (reducing seasonal closures)
Jeffrey & Barden (1999)	Offering off-season holiday package	To provide an incentive to stay in off-season
Jang (2004); Jeffrey & Barden (1999); Witt & Moutinho (1995)	Diversifying into niche product or service areas (e.g. identifying and matching seasonal motivation with product/service or local attraction)	Attracting a different market

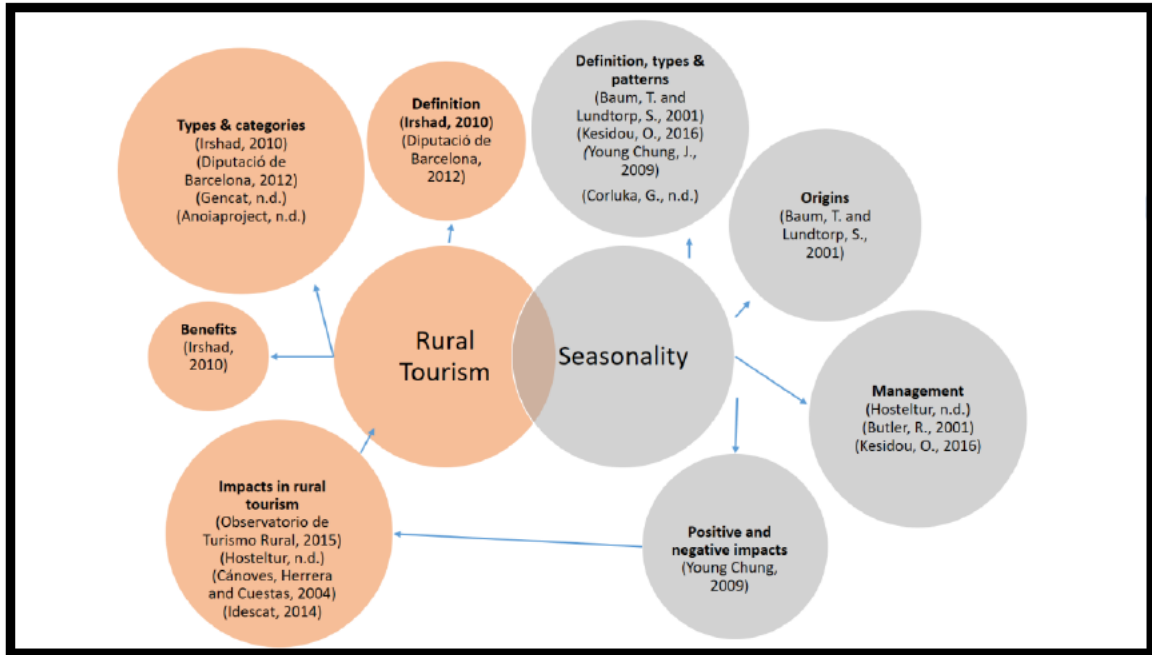
Jang (2004)	Diversifying to increase local customers	Increasing business in low periods
<b>3. Market diversification</b>		
Witt & Moutinho (1995)	Marketing campaigns to attract different markets in different seasons (a multi-segment approach)	Flattening of seasonal peaks and troughs
Jang (2004)	Determination of the optimal segment mix (e.g. financial portfolio theory)	Increasing yield (reducing costs and increasing income)
Jeffrey & Barden (1999)	Align with tour operators or travel agents to sell product/service	Increasing business in low periods and increasing market penetration
<b>4. Facilitation by the state</b>		
Witt & Moutinho (1995); Goulding, Baum & Morrison (2004)	Staggering of holidays over a longer period	Flattening of seasonal peaks and troughs
Goulding, Baum & Morrison (2004); Krakover (2001); Witt & Moutinho (1995)	Initiatives to increase the labour market and to encourage labour force flexibility (e.g. relaxing regulations on work visas for seasonal work or training incentives)	Lack of seasonal workers
Goulding, Baum & Morrison (2004)	Provision of business support services (marketing, financial planning)	Cash flow and other financial problems
Witt & Moutinho (1995); Baum & Hagen (1999)	Provision of loans or subsidies by government to develop product or local services	Improving the business or destination to increase tourism
Goulding, Baum & Morrison (2004); Witt & Moutinho (1995)	Environmental regeneration initiatives	Damage to local environment during peak seasons
Goulding, Baum & Morrison (2004)	Support off-season community initiatives (local festivals)	Reduced trade for local businesses
Goulding, Baum & Morrison (2004)	Improved and expanded regional infrastructure	Greater access to rural or remote areas
Baum & Hagen (1997); Goulding, Baum & Morrison (2004)	Development of local business networks and partnerships	Greater marketing resources and support for infrastructure development

Source: Modified after Kesidou, O., (2016)

## 2.2 Literature map

The literature map pictured below shows a clear structure of the literature review, with the authors mentioned in it.

Figure 2 Literature map

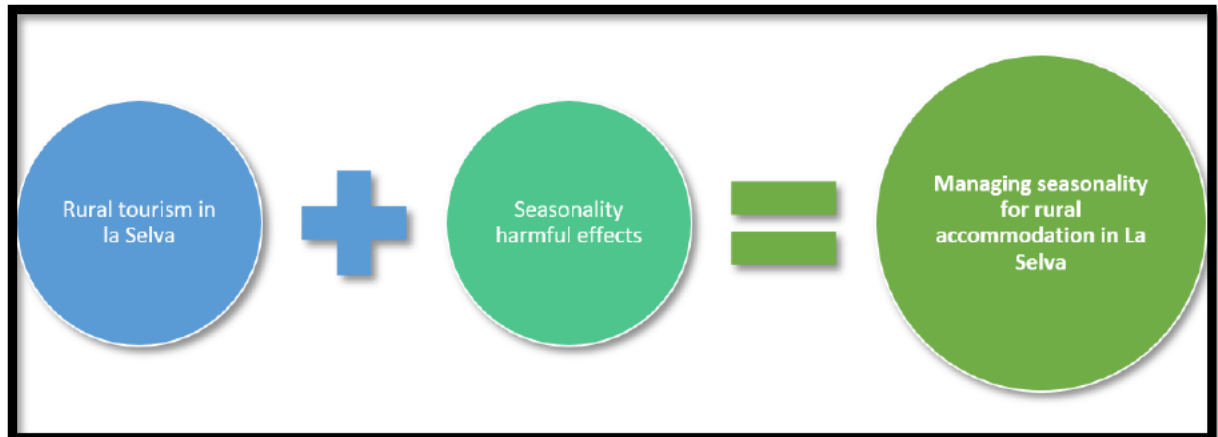


Source: Own elaboration from literature review (2017)



## 2.3 Conceptual framework

Figure 3 Conceptual framework



Source: Own elaboration (2017)

Summarizing the existing literature on the seasonality concept, management, policies and impacts upon destination areas, these are the main key concepts:

- 1) As Corluka, G. (n.d.) established, seasonality is one of the main defining characteristics of global tourism and has been recognized as one of the most distinctive features of tourism. It is a temporal imbalance in the phenomenon of tourism which is expressed in receiving too many tourists and visitors at certain times while at other times there are too few tourists in the region.
- 2) Its origins are mainly natural which means it attracts visitors during favoured climatic conditions and institutional, which consists of the outcome of a combination of religious, cultural, ethnic and social factors (Baum, T. and Lundtorp, S., 2001).
- 3) As Young Chung, J. (2009) mentioned, the seasonality's negative effects can be divided into three categories: employment, environment and economics. It also presents some positive effects from the viewpoints of sociology and ecology.
- 4) There are several methods to reduce seasonality. Kesidou, O. (2016) mentioned that there are four principal strategies for managing seasonality: changing the product mix, market diversification, differential pricing and encouragement/facilitation by the state of the staggering of holidays

### 3. Chapter 3. Methods

#### 3.1 Overall research design

According to Altinay, L. and Paraskevas, A. *“The research philosophy called phenomenology (or interpretivism) is concerned with methods that examine people and their social behaviour and has its roots in the social sciences”* (2008, p. 70), for this reason the research philosophy that will be followed is phenomenology, because it is not about interpreting the reality in an objective way using data obtained from surveys and experiments. This research uses the case study strategy which is defined as a strategy for doing research which involves an empirical investigation of a particular contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context using multiple sources of evidence (Altinay, L. and Paraskevas, A.; 2008). In order to know “why” the phenomenon of seasonality is occurring, it will be necessary to draw upon a wider array of documentary information, in addition to conducting interviews (Yin, R., 2014), for this reason, this case study uses two data collection techniques for triangulation of data which are: documentation (analysing the different theories about seasonality) and open-ended interviews with the owners of rural accommodation. It is important to use these different methods to establish different views of the phenomena.

On the other hand, the research could be driven from an inductive or deductive approach. According to Altinay, L. and Paraskevas, A., induction is *“a process whereby from sensible singulars, perceived by the senses, one arrives at universal concepts and principles held by the intellect”* (2008, p. 73). In this research, there will be an inductive approach since from singular observations of seasonality in rural tourism will be drawn a conclusion. I am interested in understanding why seasonality is happening and how to avoid it rather than describing what is happening.

#### 3.2 Data collection techniques and research instruments

In the first place, it will be used the content analysis of documents. This data collection technique involves analysing textbooks, book chapters, journal articles & publications to corroborate and augment evidence and to compare it with findings from other sources. This data collection technique is less time-consuming and costly and it allows doing “desk research” without any disruption. Anyway, this technique also shows some disadvantages such as the limited set of documents and the need of carefully analysing documents which may have been written for another purpose (Altinay, L. and Paraskevas, A.; 2008). This first part is mainly based on

analysing the different theories and approaches that can be found in academic papers, reports and other type of documents to elaborate my theoretical framework. As mentioned before, the theoretical research is necessary to understand the phenomenon of seasonality and its effects on rural tourism so will be possible to develop some measures to avoid it.

Finally, the other data collection technique that will be used during the research will be interviews. This technique consists of collecting data through asking questions, and listening and noting the responses concerning to the research topic (Altinay, L. and Paraskevas, A.; 2008). In order to get to know how theories and methods are applied and carried out in practice, will be interviewed the owners of ten rural accommodations located in the La Selva to analyse how do they face the seasonal phenomenon and which measures have been implemented. Will be used the semi structured interview technique, which is used to find out what is happening, seek new insights and identify general patterns (Altinay, L. and Paraskevas, A.; 2008). These interviews will be already prepared with the list of all the questions, topics and issues that will be covered during the interview; however, their order could be modified during the interview. This technique is very time consuming compared to other techniques, because it is necessary to secure the interviews, also organizing, preparing and conducting them. Nevertheless, it provides valuable content to the research because it will be possible to know the owners' opinions and the situation of seasonality in La Selva.

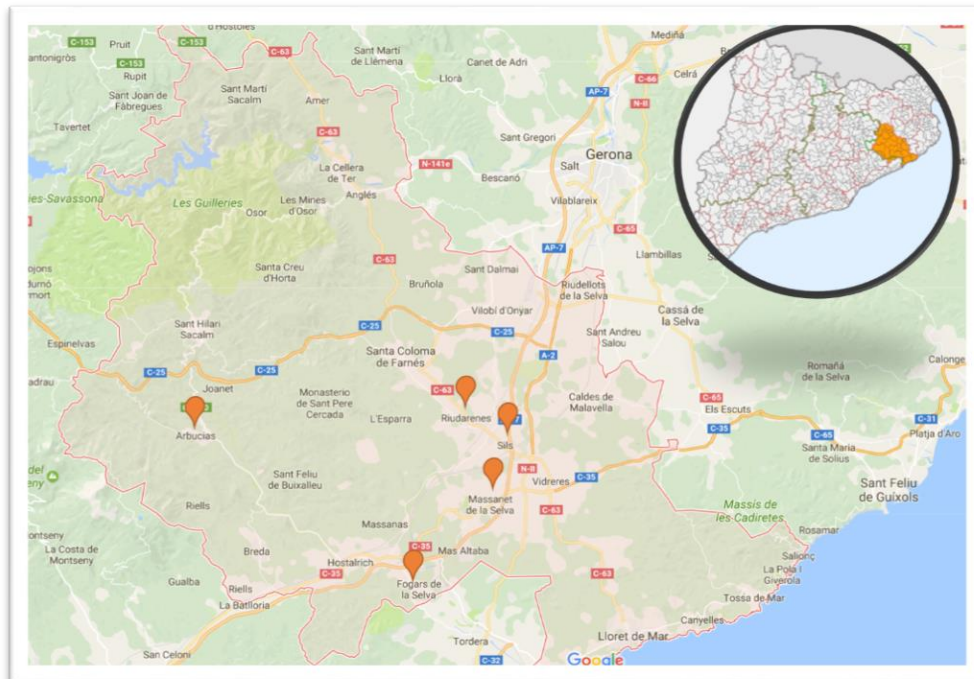
### 3.3 Research context and participants

The sample technique that will be used in this research is the non-probability sampling which according to Altinay, L. and Paraskevas, A., could be defined as "*sampling where it is not possible to specify the probability that any person or other unit on which the survey is based will be included in the sample*" (2008, p. 95), so this research uses non-probability sampling because it doesn't depend upon the rationale of probability theory. Will be applied specifically the judgmental sampling which is a form of convenience sampling where participants are handpicked from the accessible population (Altinay, L. and Paraskevas, A.; 2008). In this research, will be selected ten rural arrangements out of all the ones located in La Selva. The participants will be asked via email throughout the month of April to have a personal interview and if not possible, by telephone.

These are the selected establishments:

1. Establishment 1 – Riudarenes
2. Establishment 2 – Riudarenes
3. Establishment 3 – Riudarenes
4. Establishment 4 – Sant Hilari de Sacalm
5. Establishment 5 – Arbúcies
6. Establishment 6 – Arbúcies
7. Establishment 7 - Arbúcies
8. Establishment 8 – Maçanet de la Selva
9. Establishment 9 – Arbúcies
10. Establishment 10 – Sils

Figure 4 Location of the selected rural establishments



Source: Own elaboration (2017)

The list of 12 questions asked to the rural allotments are the following ones:

**Q1. Is your accommodation affected by seasonality?**

In the first place, in order to start the study, it is essential to know whether the accommodation has seasonality impacts or not.

**Q2. If so, do you consider seasonality has positive or negative effects for your accommodation?**

This question tries to identify how seasonality impacts rural tourism accommodation which could have both positive and negative effects.

**Q3. Which are the most relevant problems caused by seasonality?**

Seasonality has some negative effects which are divided into three categories: employment, environment and economics (Young Chung, J., 2009). This question tries to verify in which category belong the main problems the establishments have.

**Q4. Which methods do you use to manage it?**

Once have been analysed the seasonality impacts, it is necessary to know how do rural accommodation manage them. In this question are mentioned the approaches used to overcome seasonality.

**Q5. Are the methods mentioned in the previous question providing good results?**

This question was asked to know if the strategies used to address seasonality impacts are effective or not.

**Q6. Do you think there are some other actions that could be taken to combat seasonality?**

**Why don't you use these methods?**

This question aimed to discover the owner's knowledge about the principal strategies used for managing seasonality.

**Q7. Rate from 1 to 5 if the problems listed below are a concern for your accommodation (1- is irrelevant; 5 - very important):**

Seasonality affects the employment rate
It causes environment problems due to overcrowding
There is instability of revenues
Seasonality creates fear to invest
Tourism resources have high-risk of underutilization and overutilization

Rating scale:

- 1– Not at all important
- 2– Slightly important
- 3– Important
- 4– Fairly Important
- 5– Very important

This question looks very similar to the second one but this inquiry tried to analyze if the main problems of seasonality mentioned in the Literature Review are also a concern for rural accommodation (Young Chung, J., 2009).

**Q8. Which are the seasons/periods of high and low tourist activity in your accommodation?**

This question tried to identify which are their peak tourism seasons in order to know which of the three basic seasonality patterns do they have: single-peak, two-peak or non-peak seasonality (Kesidou, O., 2016).

**Q9. What kind of client do you receive in each of the seasons?**

**Q10. Does the type of activity carried out by your customers vary in each of the seasons?**

These two questions aimed to get to know who are their main target customer and which products do they demand.

**Q11. Do you think the weather/climate is the main cause of seasonality in your region?**

In here, there was the intention to determine if the origins of this phenomenon in this area are natural or institutional (Baum, T. and Lundtorp, S., 2001).

**Q12. If you had to mention your major concerns/weaknesses of rural tourism, which ones would they be?**

This question was asked to know which are the owners' major concerns and if seasonality is one of them.

### 3.4 Data analysis


In this study, there will be qualitative data which will come predominantly from the interview transcripts and documents analysis. The theory-driven tools will be put to one side and will be explored the study's findings to generate new knowledge. The data analysis will take place in the following stages (Altinay, L. and Paraskevas, A.; 2008):

1. Familiarisation with the data: consists in reviewing all the data about seasonality from the observation, the interviews and the theoretical research and trying to link all the information
2. Coding, conceptualization and ordering are about categorizing all data and making a conceptual interpretation of the phenomenon from interviews transcripts and content analysis of documents.

### 3.5 Ethical Considerations

Since will be needed some data through interviews, it will be necessary to ask for permission to use this data and assuring that participants' confidentiality and anonymity will be maintained (Altinay, L. and Paraskevas, A.; 2008). The purpose of the interview and the study will be explained clearly and will be answered all questions. Furthermore, it is also an important point to avoid plagiarism and referencing adequately to the authors of whom have been used some of their theories or studies to develop this research, this is the reason why the Ethics Form has been completed before initiating the data collection as shown in the Appendix 8. Furthermore, the interviewees were asked to sign an information sheet and consent form to certify that the information provided can be used in the study; these signed documents are available in the Appendix 1, 2 & 3. For the interviews made via telephone, will be asked orally for their consent. The document that they were asked to firm is the one shown in the image below:

Figure 5 Information sheet and consent form


**SCHOOL OF TOURISM & HOSPITALITY MANAGEMENT**  
**SANT IGNASI**  
**Ramon Lull University**

**Information sheet and consent form**

Name of researcher: Berta Oriol Agell

Contact details: [REDACTED]

Name of University supervisors: Emili Valdero, Esther Birkhorst

E-mail addresses: [REDACTED]

---

I am gathering research for my Undergraduate Dissertation, carried out within the Bachelor's Degree of Tourism and Hospitality Management taught at the School of Tourism & Hospitality Management Sant Ignasi (Universitat Ramon Llull). The topic of my dissertation is to research how seasonality could be better managed for rural accommodation in La Selva.

I would like to gather the data needed for my research through interviews with employees of the rural accommodation.

Kindly confirm:

• I confirm that I have read and understood the information stated above	YES	NO
• I have had the opportunity to consider the information, ask questions and have them answered satisfactorily	YES	NO
• I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time, without giving any reason, without my business or legal rights being affected	YES	NO
• I agree to take part in the above explained research study	YES	NO
• I give permission for the interview to be voice recorded	YES	NO
• I certify that the information shared with the researcher can be revealed in the study	YES	NO
• I certify that my personal details will not be revealed for the study and made anonymous	YES	NO
• I certify that the information of the hotel (name of the brand and chain if applicable) will not be revealed and made anonymous	YES	NO

Name of person taking consent: \_\_\_\_\_ Researcher: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

## 4. Chapter 4. Findings and discussion

The sample in this study included the owners of ten rural accommodation establishments in La Selva. A total of four out of the ten interviews were conducted: three interviews were conducted in person and one was conducted via telephone; all the other establishments did not answer the request. The interviewed rural allotments are: Establishment 1, Establishment 2, Establishment 3, Establishment 7.

The Establishment 1 is located in the village of Riudarenes and offers the full rental of the accommodation. It consists of a 2-floor rural house of 250 sqm, full equipped with two bathrooms, kitchen, dining room, living room and four bedrooms with a total holding capacity of 12 people. This property has an external space of 2000 square meters with swimming pool, a front porch and a barbecue area.

Regarding the rural accommodation Establishment 7, it is located in the region of Arbúcies and disposes of two rural apartments and of the old rural house “Casa de Pagés”. These three rural lodgings are totally independent so they can be rented separately or together. Establishment 7 is ideal for groups up to 20 people. They each offer fully equipped double rooms, kitchen, dining room and bathroom. It also has a swimming pool, a playing area and a small farm with ponies, sheep, fishes, etc.

The third interviewed allotment Establishment 2 is ubicated in Riudarenes. They offer the full rental of the establishment. It is a Masia with 7 double rooms with private bathroom, dining room, kitchen, etc. The property has an overall area of 4500 sqm with swimming pool, with the possibility to play football and basketball, a table tennis, a barbecue area, etc.

Last but not least, was interviewed the owner of both accommodation called Establishment 3 located in Riudarenes. This Establishment 3 is an old farmhouse ideally distributed for various families or a group of friends up to 18 people. It consists of two floors fully equipped with living rooms, six bedrooms, 4 bathrooms... Outside the house is available a swimming pool, a barbecue area, a fire place, a tennis table, etc. On the other hand, there is the second Establishment 3 which is a 2-floor Masia Catalana with 6 bedrooms with private bathroom, kitchen, playing area, dining room, etc. It has a maximum capacity of 15 people.



In the exterior, it is possible to find a tennis table, a swimming pool, barbecue, football pitch, etc. There is also available a small farm with chickens and donkeys for the children.

To sum up, all four allotments offer very similar products & services since they all offer the full rental of a fully equipped house, with swimming pool, garden, playing and a barbecue area. The houses are located in a quiet area with good access to the nearest village. They also offer very similar rates which vary around 700€ the weekends (two nights) including sheets, towels, linen and cleaning service after the stay. In case the clients demand catering or other activities and excursions out of the house; the owners provide them with information about some natural spaces they can visit, where are the nearest beaches, which are the activities available in the region, etc. The only establishments that offer an added value are Establishment 3 and Establishment 7 because they have a small farm with some animals which is ideal for children and families.

In order to analyse the key points of the semi-structured interviews with the owners of the rural establishments and to present the results, the table 3 has been created in order to show a summary with the most relevant information of the interviewees' responses. In the upper part of the table is specified the question number Q1, Q2, Q3...; which stands for question one, question two... In the left-hand column are named the interviewed property names.

Table 3 Summary of the interviews

Property	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q5	Q6	Q7
<b>Estab. 2</b> 11/04/2017	Yes	Negative	- Low occupancy during the weekdays - Income instability - High costs of maintenance	- Pricing policies: group promotions	- Not really	- Trying to attract the senior target by sending propaganda to the senior citizens' centres. - Lack of time and knowledge	- <u>Seasonality affects the employment rate</u> : 1 - <u>Causes environment problems</u> : 1 - <u>Instability of revenues</u> : 4 - <u>Creates fear to invest</u> : 2 - <u>High risk of underutilization and overutilization</u> : 2
<b>Estab. 1</b> 10/04/2017	Yes	Negative	-They have fixed costs to assume: rental - Instability of the revenues	- Working with tour operators - Working with word of mouth effect	- They don't know yet	- They don't know yet - Lack of knowledge	- <u>Seasonality affects the employment rate</u> : 1 - <u>Causes environment problems</u> : 1 - <u>Instability of revenues</u> : 5 - <u>Creates fear to invest</u> : 5 - <u>High risk of underutilization and overutilization</u> : 5
<b>Estab. 3</b> 08/04/2017	Yes	Negative	- Low occupancy during the weekdays	- Pricing policies: group promotions -Offering complementary activities: organizing schools' visits, riding a donkey, collecting eggs... -Working with tour operators -Close the business during the month of January - Working with word of mouth effect	-Yes, a little bit. This has been the best year	-Investing by offering more services during low season since having a heated pool - There is too much competition with other tourist accommodation and we are afraid of not recouping the investment	- <u>Seasonality affects the employment rate</u> : 1 - <u>Causes environment problems</u> : 1 - <u>Instability of revenues</u> : 5 - <u>Creates fear to invest</u> : 5 - <u>High risk of underutilization and overutilization</u> : 2
<b>Estab. 7</b> 24/04/2017	Yes	Negative	-We do not have clients during the weekdays	-Pricing policies: group promotions -We try to attract the senior target by offering free activities or gifts	-There are not noticeable changes	-All strategies are related with pricing policies but they cannot compete with the other tourist accommodation	- <u>Seasonality affects the employment rate</u> : 1 - <u>Causes environment problems</u> : 1 - <u>Instability of revenues</u> : 4 - <u>Creates fear to invest</u> : 5 - <u>High risk of underutilization and overutilization</u> : 5

Property	Q8	Q9	Q10	Q11	Q12
<b>Estab. 2</b>	<p>- <u>Low season</u>: January, February</p> <p>- <u>High Season</u>: summer and weekends</p>	<p>- <u>Low season</u>: locals, principally coming from Barcelona</p> <p>- <u>High season</u>: foreigners coming from Europe and America</p>	<p>- <u>Low season</u>: people aiming to disconnect and to enjoy the facilities of the house</p> <p>- <u>High season</u>: clients who want to travel throughout the region by car (they make some excursions to Cadaqués, Barcelona, to the beach...)</p>	Yes, the climate is the main cause	<p>-New technologies (online promotion, social media...)</p> <p>-Accessibility to the allotments (access routes)</p> <p>- Seasonality is NOT a concern since I can rest during the midweek</p>
<b>Estab. 1</b>	<p>- <u>Low season</u>: From September to July</p> <p>- <u>High Season</u>: from July to September</p>	<p>- <u>Low season</u>: locals</p> <p>- <u>High season</u>: foreigners</p>	<p>The type of activity does not vary since they offer the same products and services in both seasons</p> <p>- <u>High season</u>: swimming pool and exterior facilities</p>	Yes, the climate is an important factor but also the holiday periods	<p>-Institutions complicate too much the regulations and policies in order to manage a rural establishment</p> <p>- Seasonality</p>
<b>Estab. 3</b>	<p>- <u>Low season</u>: during the weekdays and winter</p> <p>- <u>High Season</u>: from June to September</p>	<p>- <u>Low season</u>: Locals</p> <p>- <u>High Season</u>: Foreigners, basically coming from Europe</p>	<p>The type of activity carried out depends on the harvest season: during autumn, the clients want to collect mushrooms, in winter “calçots” ...</p>	Yes, the climate is the main cause of seasonality	<p>-Seasonality</p> <p>-Intense competition with new tourist accommodation modalities</p> <p>-Nowadays you need to offer an added value to succeed</p>
<b>Estab. 7</b>	<p>- <u>Low season</u>: months of January, February and March</p> <p>- <u>High Season</u>: holidays seasons – Christmas, Easter, Summer</p>	<p>- <u>Low season</u>: Locals (coming from Catalunya)</p> <p>- <u>High Season</u>: Foreigners coming from Europe</p>	<p>Does not depend on the season but on the number of nights booked. This means that if they spend 2 nights they stay at the house but if they come for a longer stay, they normally travel through the region</p>	No. We think the main cause is institutional (holidays period)	<p>-Unfair competition: illegal tourist apartments</p> <p>-The municipality should limit the number of licenses</p> <p>-Concern about the future; they are not sure that rural tourism will have success in the coming years</p>

Source: Own elaboration (2017)

As it is shown in the table above, all the interviewees agreed in the first and second questions that their accommodation are affected by seasonality and that it has negative effects for their accommodation. The most relevant problems caused by seasonality mentioned by the four owners is the lack of clients or the low occupancy during the weekdays since they normally receive reservations for the weekends. Another mentioned aspect is the instability of the revenues; therefore, it is difficult to predict the monthly benefits and sometimes the fixed costs such as the rental of the house and the maintenance of the infrastructures are borne by themselves. In relation with the fourth question, the most widespread method they used to manage this phenomenon is related to the pricing policy strategy; they offer some promotional pricing such as discounts and group booking offers in order to increase visitation in the periods of low demand. Another mentioned strategy is working closely with tour operators or travel agents to sell their products although they also noted they usually work with the word of mouth effect. One interviewee considers the closure of the business during the month of January since it is their off-peak season and they do not receive clients. One more strategy used by one of the establishments is offering complementary services such as organizing schools' visits, riding a donkey, collecting eggs and mushrooms... Finally, only one interviewee noted that they were trying to attract a different target market which is the senior by offering some gifts or free activities.

Nevertheless, as it is shown in the question number 5, most interviewees seem to agree that the methods mentioned are not providing significant improvements to their businesses.

Two of the interviewees pointed out in the question number 6 the possibility to invest to offer more services during off-peak season or trying to attract the senior customer target by sending propaganda to the senior citizens' centres. Nonetheless, it was mentioned that even if they would like to perform other actions to combat seasonality, they do not have the necessary knowledge and time to do it. Additionally, two of the establishments agreed that there is too much competition with other tourist accommodation so it makes very difficult to apply other actions.

On the other hand, the majority of the rural establishments are concerned by the following seasonality effects: the instability of revenues, it creates fear to invest since there is a high risk of not recouping their investment and the high-risk of underutilization and overutilization of the

tourist infrastructures. Conversely, seasonality does not affect their employment rate nor causes environment problems.

Concerning the seasons of high and low tourist activity, all the interviewees had very similar answers since they coincide that the months of January and February are the months with worst figures while the summer months and the weekends are the periods with higher demand. The clients they receive during the high season are foreigners basically coming from Europe and some Americans, while the low season is dominated by local tourists coming from Catalunya. All four establishments offer the full rental of the house and they do not provide any type of additional service out of the house. Nevertheless, there is a wide range of responses regarding the type of activity carried out by the customers in each of the seasons. One of the rural accommodation mentioned that during low season they receive clients aiming to disconnect and to enjoy the facilities of the house and that during the high season they accommodate clients willing to travel throughout the region by car. Another interviewee affirms that the type of activity depends on the harvest season: during autumn, the clients want to collect mushrooms, in winter “calçots...”. Finally, it was also answered that the type of activity does not depend on the season but on the number of nights booked. This means that if the clients spend 2 nights they stay at the house but if they come for a longer stay, they normally travel through the region.

All interviewees, except one, agreed that the climate is the main cause of seasonality in their region since tourists prefer to travel to La Selva during the favoured climatic conditions which is during summer. Nonetheless, they pointed out that there is also the institutional origin which means that the high-peak season coincides with the school or working holidays.

Finally, the major concerns of rural tourism shared by the interviewees would be: the seasonality effects, the new technologies (relating to the social media and online promotion), the accessibility to the allotments, there are too many rules and regulations which complicate the management of the establishments, the intense competition with new tourist accommodation modalities (including illegal tourist apartments) which offer lower prices and more capacity. To sum up there is a general concern about the future of rural tourism.

## 5. Chapter 5. Conclusions

### 5.1 Conclusions

The aim of this research was to identify how seasonality impacts rural accommodation in La Selva and to analyse how it is managed. The main conclusions of this thesis, according to the objective which consisted of developing a case study in la Selva to identify how rural accommodation is impacted by seasonality and how do they deals with it, are the following ones:

- 1) **Rural establishments located in La Selva are impacted negatively by seasonality.** As the interviewees have answered in the second and third questions of the interview, the main problems establishments face is the lack of clients during the weekdays and the months of January and February. Another negative impact are the high operating expenses related to the maintenance and the rental cost of the infrastructures. This conclusion responds to the first part of the research objective.
- 2) **The main method used by rural establishments in la Selva to manage seasonality is the differential pricing strategy; however, this method is not providing significant improvements to their businesses.** This statement answers the second part of the research question since it is explained the methods used to deal with seasonality. To a lesser extent, as indicated in the fourth and fifth questions of the interview, they also use the diversified attraction strategy by offering complementary services and trying to attract a different target market such as the senior. Furthermore, it is used the market diversification strategy since they work together with tour operators or travel agents. All these methods agree with the four principal strategies for managing seasonality mentioned in the Literature Review (Kesidou, O., 2016).
- 3) **The lack of specific knowledge in hospitality management makes difficult for rural accommodation owners to take further actions to face seasonality.** As mentioned in the question number six of the interview, the owners of the rural establishments pointed out that their lack of knowledge and the existing strong competition in the market do not allow them to take other actions to face seasonality.

## 5.2 Recommendations

There are many strategies that the owners of rural accommodation could implement to increase visitation in low periods. However, since they do not have too much time and resources, they should consider promoting the elderly and the young market as a way to deseasonalise the rural tourism demand.

The senior target (50-70 years old) is highly recommended since they have more free time and money than other groups and they usually enjoy rural and quiet environments. It is important to use both internet and traditional media for promotion. There should be available different services and assistance to cover their needs. On the other hand, the young travellers (18-40 years old) are mostly looking for unique experiences. Their daily budgets are smaller but travel over extended periods of time. In order to attract this type of customer, it is important to offer a unique mix of accommodation and experiences by offering different options for accommodation and activities (CBI Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2016).

Finally, it is highly recommended that the local government organizes some workshops for the rural establishments owners to train them in how to deal with seasonality and to show them the different approaches and strategies available to overcome this phenomenon. The promotion of courses on seasonality management will increase their businesses productivity and will strengthen their competitiveness within the market.

## 5.3 Limitations and further Research

There were some significant limitations of the research; the first one is related with the little time available for fieldwork. On the other hand, another limitation was the size of the sample since only a few rural establishments replied the interview request so it is difficult to ensure representative results of the region. Finally, there is a lack of prior research studies of this specific topic so that the results of the research cannot be compared with those of previous studies. Last but not least, it would be really interesting to expand the research to other areas which have been not covered in order to obtain a broader picture of the seasonality impacts in rural tourism. This will require increasing the number of interviews to the rural establishments and a deeper analysis of the situation.

## References

Altinay, L., Paraskevas, A. (2008) *Planning Research in Tourism and Hospitality*. Oxford: Butterworth-Heinemann.

Anoiaproject (n.d.). *Manual de turisme rural* [Internet], Consell Comarcal de l'Ainoia. Available from:

<[http://www.anoiaproject.cat/uploads/documents/115/manual\\_de\\_turisme\\_rural.pdf](http://www.anoiaproject.cat/uploads/documents/115/manual_de_turisme_rural.pdf)>

[Accessed 1 March 2017].

Baum, T. And Lundtorp, S. eds. (2001) *Seasonality in Tourism*. Oxford: Pergamon.

Butler, R. W. (2001). *Seasonality in tourism: Issues and implications*. Seasonality in Tourism. London: Pergamon, 5-22.

Cal Bellés Mas (n.d.). *Cal Bellés Mas – Casa de turisme rural independent* [Internet], Cal Bellés Mas. Available from: <<http://calbellesmas.com/en/la-casa/>> [Accessed 22 March 2017].

Can Micos (n.d.). *Can Micos* [Internet], Can Micos. Available from: <<http://www.canmicos.com/es/index.html>> [Accessed 22 March 2017].

Cannas, R. (2012). An Overview of Tourism Seasonality: Key Concepts and Policies. *Alma Tourism* [Internet], 5. Available from: <<https://almatourism.unibo.it/article/view/3120/2519>> [Accessed 2 March 2017].

Can Rajoler (n.d.). *Can Rajoler* [Internet], Can Rajoler. Available from: <<http://canrajoler.com/es/>> [Accessed 22 March 2017].

CBI Ministry of Foreign Affairs (2016). *What are the opportunities for Rural Tourism from Europe?* [Internet], CBI Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Available from: <<https://www.cbi.eu/market-information/tourism/rural-tourism/rural-tourism-europe/>> [Accessed 22 March 2017].



CETT (2015). *La estacionalidad afecta a más de 4.000 alojamientos de turismo rural* [Internet], CETT. Available from: <<http://www.cett.es/gr-hoteleria/noticies/noticia2.aspx?idNoticia=153241&blogcomment=true&idIdioma=es>> [Accessed 1 March 2017].

Clubrural (2015). Estacionalidad y accesibilidad, grandes retos del turismo rural. *Europapress*. [Internet], 10 March Available from: <<http://www.europapress.es/turismo/agencias-ttoo/noticia-estacionalidad-accesibilidad-grandes-retos-turismo-rural-20150310125857.html>> [Accessed 26 February 2017].

Clubrural (2015). *Barómetro del Turismo rural en España* [Internet], Clubrural. Available from: <<https://www.clubrural.com/barometro-turismo-rural/barometro-primer-semester-2015.pdf>> [Accessed 2 March 2017].

Corluka, G. (n.d.) *SEASONALITY IN TOURISM – causes, implications and strategies* [Internet], Academia.edu. Available from: <[http://www.academia.edu/8670280/SEASONALITY\\_IN\\_TOURISM\\_causes\\_implications\\_and\\_strategies](http://www.academia.edu/8670280/SEASONALITY_IN_TOURISM_causes_implications_and_strategies)> [Accessed 26 February 2017].

Diputació de Barcelona (2012). *Estudi legislatiu de turisme rural a l'Estat espanyol* [Internet], Diputació de Barcelona. Available from: <[https://www.diba.cat/documents/167269/1355999/turisme\\_rural.pdf/9eb49c5b-3291-4fa7-9e66-075efe59b590](https://www.diba.cat/documents/167269/1355999/turisme_rural.pdf/9eb49c5b-3291-4fa7-9e66-075efe59b590)> [Accessed 27 February 2017].

Gencat (n.d.). *Turismo rural* [Internet], Generalitat de Catalunya. Available from: <<http://act.gencat.cat/408/turismo-rural/?lang=es>> [Accessed 2 March 2017].

Hosteltur (n.d.) *Ideas para Minimizar la estacionalidad en turismo* [Internet], Hosteltur. Available from: <<https://static.hosteltur.com/web/uploads/2009/07/f4f8e0ce67bd7157.pdf>> [Accessed 12 November 2015].

Idescat (2015) *Alojamientos turísticos; Por tipo; Marcas Turísticas* [Internet], Idescat. Available from: <<http://www.idescat.cat/pub/?id=aec&n=548>> [Accessed 9 March 2017].

Irshad, H. (2010). *Rural Tourism – an overview* [Internet], Government of Alberta. Available from: <[http://www1.agric.gov.ab.ca/\\$Department/deptdocs.nsf/all/csi13476/\\$FILE/Rural-Tourism.pdf](http://www1.agric.gov.ab.ca/$Department/deptdocs.nsf/all/csi13476/$FILE/Rural-Tourism.pdf)> [Accessed 7 March 2017].

La Fabrega (n.d.). *Espai Rural La Fàbrega* [Internet], La Fabrega. Available from: <<http://www.lafabrega.com/>> [Accessed 22 March 2017].

Mas Romeu (n.d.). *Mas Romeu – Turisme Rural Arbúcies* [Internet], Mas Romeu. Available from: <<http://www.masromeu.net/reservas.asp?idioma=ES>> [Accessed 22 March 2017].

Observatorio del turismo rural (2015) *El problema de la estacionalidad del turismo rural* [Internet], Observatorio del turismo rural. Available from: <<http://www.escapadarural.com/observatorio/el-problema-de-la-estacionalidad/>> [Accessed 22 October 2015].

Kesidou, O. (2016). *Seasonality in tourism*. Ph.D. thesis, School of Economics, Business administration & legal studies, Thessaloniki, Greece.

Romero, L. (2007) *Importancia del desarrollo del turismo rural* [Internet], rupuyen. Available from : <<https://rupuyen.wordpress.com/2007/08/08/importancia-del-desarrollo-del-turismo-rur>> [Accessed 14 December 2015].

Yin, R. (2014) *Case study research. Design and Methods*. 5th ed. USA: SAGE.


Young Chung, J. (2009). *Seasonality in tourism*. E-Review of Tourism Research, 7 (5).

WeblogTurismo (2016). *Top 5 de tipos de alojamientos turísticos en España*. 16 June [Internet blog], Available from: <<http://elblogdeturismo.es/top-5-de-tipos-de-alojamientos-turisticos-en-espana/>> [Accessed 28 February 2017].

WTO (2004). *Rural Tourism in Europe: Experiences, Development and Perspectives*. [Internet], UNWTO. Available from: <<http://www.e-unwto.org/doi/book/10.18111/9789284407163>> [Accessed 5 March 2017].

## Appendix 1 – Ethics Form

Figure 6 Ethics Form



### Ethics form

It is important that you are sufficiently prepared to collect data doing fieldwork with 'human participants.' Your supervisor will support you in completing the Ethics Form.

**The Ethics Form MUST BE COMPLETED BY YOURSELF AND SIGNED OFF BY YOUR SUPERVISOR BEFORE UNDERTAKING RESEARCH.**

**THE SIGNED ETHICS FORM MUST BE INCLUDED IN THE FINAL UNDERGRADUATE DISSERTATION.**

Risk checklist – Please answer ALL the questions in each of the sections below.

Risk category 1	Yes	No
Use any information OTHER than that which is freely available in the public domain?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Involve analysis of pre-existing data which contains sensitive or personal information?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Involve direct and/or indirect contact with human participants?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Require consent to conduct?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Require consent to publish?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Have a risk of compromising confidentiality?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Have a risk of compromising anonymity?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Involve risk to any party, including the researcher?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Contain elements which you OR your supervisor are NOT trained to conduct?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
<b>Risk Category 2</b>		

Require informed consent OTHER than that which is straightforward to obtain to conduct the research?		X
Require informed consent OTHER than that which is straightforward to obtain to publish the research?		X
Require information to be collected and/or provided OTHER than that which is straightforward to obtain?		X
<b>Risk category 3</b>		
Involve participants who are particularly vulnerable?		X
Involve participants who are unable to give informed consent?		X
Involve data collection taking place BEFORE consent form is given?		X
Involve any deliberate cover data collection?		X
Involve risk to the researcher or participants beyond that experienced in everyday life?		X
Cause (or could cause) physical or psychological negative consequences?		X
Use intrusive or invasive procedures?		X
Include a financial incentive to participate in the research?		X

**IF APPLICABLE:**

List agreed actions with your tutor to be taken to address issues raised in questions Risk Category 2:

.....

**Student Declaration:** I confirm that I will undertake the Undergraduate Dissertation as detailed above. I understand that I must abide by the terms of this approval and that I

may not make any substantial amendments to the Undergraduate Dissertation without further approval.

Name: Pedraza Cnd Signed: [REDACTED] Date: 23 February 2017

Agreement from the supervisor of the student:

Name: Esmeralda Valls Signed: [REDACTED] Date: 23/02/17

**Risk Category 1:** If you answered NO to all the questions, your study is classified as Risk Category 1. In this case:

- The supervisor can give immediate approval for undertaking the field work for the Undergraduate Dissertation.
- A copy of this signed Form MUST be included in the Undergraduate Dissertation.

**Risk Category 2:** If you answered YES only to questions in Risk Category 1 and/or 2, your study is classified as Risk Category 2. In this case:

- You must meet with your supervisor and clarify how the issues encountered are going to be dealt with before taking off with the field work.
- Once clarified, the actions taken must be stated in the Form. Then the supervisor can guarantee approval for the field work for the Undergraduate Dissertation.
- A copy of this signed Form MUST be included in the Undergraduate Dissertation.

**Risk Category 3:** If you answered YES to questions included in Risk Category 3, your study is classified as Risk Category 3. In this case:

- You must discuss with your supervisor how to re-direct the research and data collection thesis to avoid risks mentioned in Category 3.
- You must complete the Ethical Form again until Risk Category 1 or 2 is obtained.
- A copy of this signed Form MUST be included in the Undergraduate Dissertation.

A copy of this signed form MUST be included in the Undergraduate Dissertation.