

Chapter 9

Fluvial Resources and Recreational and Sports Activities: Contributions of Sport Fishing to the Tourist Attraction of Serra da Estrela

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ABSTRACT

This research aims to reflect on the importance of inland surface waters for the development of local communities and their potential to foster tourism and leisure activities, promoting differentiated tourism products that project this inland tourist destination. It seeks to inquire into new business opportunities, while simultaneously reflecting on ways of controlling uses and issues of preservation and environmental sustainability. The study is developed in the Serra da Estrela territory, framing the destination and establishing an approach to the evolution of recreational fishing and its contributions to the strengthening of tourism and leisure, given the exceptional conditions of water mass supply and its environmental value for an activity that has an intense relationship with nature. The purpose is also to establish lines of research to be followed and methodologies to be implemented for a better knowledge of this activity and identify action strategies for the future.

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INTRODUCTION

Water is a valuable resource and provides the basis for the implementation and development of tourist, recreational and sports activities, promoting its use in the promotion of the destination and generating new empowerment for the expansion of demand and its differentiation throughout the year. The expansion of tourism and recreational activities based on river resources implies a greater responsibility in their management and use, requiring the promotion of conditions, materials and regulations, which allow their enjoyment in a safe, sustainable and satisfactory way for their users.

In Serra da Estrela – the largest mountain in the Portuguese territory – the main national rivers originate, along with a number of lakes and reservoirs of relevant importance for water supply to the population and economic activities. In the last two decades, these have come to constitute important bathing, leisure and sport spaces for the inland regions, promoting different activities and with different demands throughout the year.

Recreational fishing has traditionally been seen and managed as a secondary and even residual activity in tourism, without there being an effective strategy for its valorization as a tourism development asset in the form of concerted strategies or it being promoted in an integrated way with other products.

The lakes and rivers of Serra da Estrela constitute a relevant resource for the promotion of recreational and sports activities related to fishing. The attraction of the surface waters of this mountain territory for sport fishing, in particular salmonids, represents a tourist and recreational resource for the region with concrete effects on local commerce, hotels and restaurants, given the practitioners involved and the natural and cultural contexts that the territory offers. The environmental value associated with its mountain geography and the existing ecosystems project Serra da Estrela as a fishing destination that is increasingly valued, either as a main motivation or as a complement to the recreational and tourist activities developed.

In this context it can be seen that the structuring of recreational and sport fishing in Serra da Estrela lacks a greater promotional development of the product, qualifying and regulating the bodies of water for the reception of this activity, which constitutes a market niche of interest in combating the seasonality of the destination, in the territorial promotion of the region, in the valuation of water resources and in the promotion of associated services.

The connection of this activity with the existing trout farms should be noted, stimulating their activity both through a greater commercialization of fish for gastronomic purposes, as well as for the repopulation of the region's lakes and rivers.

This research aims to reflect on the importance of inland surface waters for the development of local communities and their potential to foster tourism and leisure activities, promoting differentiated tourism products that project this inland tourist destination. It seeks to inquire into new business opportunities, while simultaneously reflecting on ways of controlling uses and issues of preservation and environmental sustainability. The study is developed in the Serra da Estrela territory, framing the destination and establishing an approach to the evolution of recreational fishing and its contributions to the strengthening of tourism and leisure, given the exceptional conditions of water mass supply and its environmental value for an activity that has an intense relationship with nature. The purpose is also to establish lines of research to be followed and methodologies to be implemented for a better knowledge of this activity and its practitioners. The aim is to identify action strategies for the future, regarding the organization of the tourism product, the promotion of the destination and the definition of procedures to regulate and operationalise this activity in a sustainable way.

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