

An analysis of the tourist demand of Pehuen C6 (Argentina) in times of post-pandemic

Un análisis de la demanda turística de Pehuen C6 (Argentina) en tiempos de post-pandemia

Daniela Gambarota¹, Silvia London²

¹ Dra. in Geography, Southern Economic and Social Research Institute, UNS – CONICET and Department of Geography and Tourism, UNS, Bahía Blanca, Argentina. <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-6927-7938>

² Dra. in Economy, Southern Economic and Social Research Institute, UNS – CONICET, Bahía Blanca, Argentina. <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-4597-0233>

* Corresponding author: danielagambarota@gmail.com

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ABSTRACT

Since the emergence of COVID-19, one of the sectors most affected has been tourism. However, the scenario and measures such as restrictions of movement abroad, led to a growth of regional tourism. The objective of this research is to determine how the COVID-19 pandemic has affected the tourist demand of Pehuen C6 (Argentina). From there, the opportunity arises to position itself as a regional tourist destination considering the proximity to Bahía Blanca and the attractions that the resort has. The methodology consists of a bibliographic review of relevant concepts, a characterization of the town and an analysis of the surveys carried out by the Tourism Directorate of Coronel Rosales in the summer periods from 2015 to 2021 (between 900 and 1200 annually), considering a sample error of 3%. The results show that Pehuen C6 has greater resilience than other tourist destinations and has competitive advantages in the post-pandemic tourism context. The conclusion reached is that the pandemic has been an opportunity to revalue local tourist spaces, with proposals focused on the development of creative, sustainable and responsible tourism.

Keywords: Pehuen C6, tourist demand, post-pandemic, regional tourism, resilience, competitiveness advances.

RESUMEN

Desde la aparición del COVID-19, uno de los sectores más afectados ha sido la actividad turística. Sin embargo, el escenario y medidas como las restricciones de circulación hacia el exterior, propiciaron un crecimiento del turismo regional. El objetivo de esta investigación es determinar como la pandemia COVID-19 ha afectado la demanda turística de Pehuen C6 (Argentina). A partir de allí, se plantea la oportunidad de posicionamiento como destino turístico regional considerando la cercanía a Bahía Blanca y los atractivos que posee el balneario. La metodología consiste en hacer una revisión bibliográfica de conceptos relevantes, una caracterización de la localidad y un análisis de las encuestas realizadas por la Dirección de Turismo de Coronel Rosales en los períodos estivales desde el año 2015 al 2021 (entre 900 y 1200 anuales), considerando un error muestral del 3%. Los resultados obtenidos reflejan que Pehuen C6 presenta mayores posibilidades de resiliencia que otros destinos turísticos y que posee ventajas competitivas en el contexto turístico pos-pandemia. La conclusión arribada es que la pandemia ha resultado una oportunidad para revalorizar espacios turísticos de proximidad, con propuestas centradas en el desarrollo de un turismo creativo, sustentable y responsable.

Palabras clave: Pehuen C6, demanda turística, post-pandemia, turismo regional, resiliencia, ventajas competitivas

INTRODUCTION

The emergence of COVID-19 in 2019 has caused a strong negative impact on tourism activity, both in Argentina and the rest of the world, being one of the socio-economic activities most affected by the measures adopted to stop the spread of the virus (in Argentina, preventive and compulsory social isolation measures, Decree 297/2020. DECNU-2020-297-APN-PTE). In this context, tourism was restricted by its importance as a form of human mobility and, consequently, as a propagator of the COVID-19 at a global level. Haywood, (2020), Simancas Cruz et al. (2020) and Assaf and Scuderi, (2020) agree that measures taken to curb the pandemic, such as the closure of borders and disruption of transport, have harmed the sector causing a decrease in economic income generated through tourism flows and related activities, also impacting employment levels.

From our country's perspective, the context created by the pandemic could be beneficial for economic growth. It is known that the balance of national tourist services has been historically negative: Argentines consume more tourist services abroad than foreigners in Argentina (Rojas et al, 2020). In the face of movement restrictions, and because of the prohibition or difficulty of crossing borders, people could choose destinations close to their habitual residence, reducing the risk of contagion and accessing services according to their current purchasing power, strongly affected by the economic crisis. In this way, the trend to consume foreign tourism would be reversed, impacting positively on local tourism activity, posing as an alternative of economic development and strengthening of the activity the Local Tourism and the National Tourism. Data provided by the Ministry of Tourism and Sports of Argentina (2022), endorse the above by reporting that the records of the 2022 summer season show that 32.3 million people mobilized throughout the country (2.4% more than in the 2020 season). In addition, 3 million people did so during the long carnival weekends (26 February to 1 March) and holy week (14 to 17 April).

In consideration of the above, it is possible to analyze certain tourist places in Argentina. In particular, the town of Pehuen C6 stands out as a spa town that has among its most important attractions its extensive beaches with the warmest waters of the Buenos Aires coast (21° C on average), paleontological tourism thanks to the presence of fossil traces of extinct animals that inhabited the area more than 12,000 years ago, added to the scheduled

events, the nature that surrounds it and the tranquility of the town.

The objective of this work is to analyze the variations in tourist demand in the town of Pehuen C6 considering the impact of the COVID-19.

The importance of conducting this study is that it is possible to identify the possible advantages of domestic demand capture in the current context of post-pandemic, which will result in the generation of greater economic movement and therefore, in benefits for the local community.

METHODOLOGY

In the first instance, a bibliographical investigation was carried out in relation to the impacts that COVID-19 has caused on tourism, on the concepts of tourist demand, resilience and competitive advantages by consulting specific scientific and technical articles and web pages. Then, a fieldwork was carried out in order to characterize the town and the development of tourist activity in it.

With regard to the tourist demand of the resort town itself, the data obtained from surveys carried out by the Coronel Rosales Tourist Office in Pehuen C6 in the summer periods (January and February) were considered from 2015 to 2021, in order to know its composition, determine the profile of the visitor and how its behavior has varied over the years. The number of surveys carried out varies between 900 and 1200 per year, it has been considered a sample error of 3% since the size of the representative sample of the population is determined in 1061 average people (Nogales, 2000). The surveys are organized in blocks of information that are not uniform in all periods. It is clarified that the one for the period 2020-2021 was made online given the limitations due to the health situation. The variables are divided into the socio-demographic profile (composition of the group, age, gender, place of origin, frequency of visit, level of education and occupation); reports and reservations (sources of information, reservation, and means of reservation); characteristics of the trip (services used in destination such as transport, accommodation, gastronomy, and recreation, value for money, second residences, means of transport); finally, behaviour in destination (frequency of visit, perception of quality and prices of information and beach services, general aspects such as safety, beach conditions, green spaces, cleanliness, public spaces, positive and negative reviews of the tourist destination and attractions visited). Greater relevance was given to

information on the origin of tourists and visitors, as well as on consumption in the resort, the reason for choosing the destination and the image and satisfaction with it.

BIBLIOGRAPHIC REVIEW

Tourism in times of post-pandemic

Due to its high interaction with all aspects of society, tourism is very vulnerable to crises of any nature, being affected by natural disasters, economic recessions, political instability, public health problems, etc. In this way, the tourist system is faced with the need to adapt continuously to diverse and complex shocks, which strongly impact the profitability and survival of the sector.

It could be argued that the COVID-19 crisis has been one of the deepest for tourism (Hiernaux-Nicolas, 2020b; Škare, Soriano, and Porada Rochoń, 2021) which led to the implementation of major restrictions on mobility globally, and tourists in particular. Haywood, (2020), Simancas Cruz et al. (2020) and Assaf and Scuderi, (2020) agree that measures taken to curb the pandemic - such as the closure of borders and disruption of transport -, have harmed the sector causing a decrease in the economic income generated through tourism flows and related activities, also impacting employment levels. Moreover, as reported by the World Tourism Organization (2020), during the year 2020, tourism activity has regressed for 30 years, with falls of more than 70% in visitor arrivals: destinations received about 1 billion fewer international tourists.

Although 2020 was not a favourable year for tourism, in Argentina the records of the 2021 season show that more than 12 million people mobilized throughout the country since the beginning of the season in December 2020 (Ministry of Tourism and Sports, 2021). The measures of care taken, such as the conditioning of destinations and access to medical assistance centers distributed throughout the territory, generating confidence in tourists unfavorable socio-economic conditions, the tourism sector has largely managed to adapt. UNWTO (2020) proposes as expanded scenarios for 2021-2024 an upturn in global tourism in the second half of 2021, taking between two and a half years to four, to return to 2019 levels. It also states that more than 900 million tourists made international trips in 2022, double that, in 2021, although it is still at 63% of the levels before the pandemic (OMT, 2023). All regions of the world recorded significant increases in international tourist numbers.

According to the latest surveys of the Ministry of Tourism

in Argentina were recorded (2023) 33.8 million tourists in the summer season 2023, 4.5% more than the previous season and representing an approximate economic impact of \$1,3 billion, 12% more than last season, measured at constant prices.

For its part, the World Economic Forum (WEF), in its report "Global Competitiveness Report: How Countries are Performing on the Road to Recovery" (2020), argues that 37 countries are best prepared for recovery and future economic transformation. In Latin America, Argentina, Brazil, Chile, and Mexico stand out.

In most countries it is possible to see that a new model of tourism policy has been configured that encourages the promotion of domestic tourism, prioritizing the preservation of the environment, the interest in digital advice, flexibility to cancel trips, and a destination-preference based primarily on health policies and protocol monitoring. Therefore, one of the keys to increasing the dynamics of the activity would be the national promotion of short stays, consolidating a trend where the choice of tourists is strongly influenced by the possibility of having contact with nature and being able to maintain distance to avoiding contagion.

A key factor in the reconfiguration of post-pandemic tourism is the psycho-sociological nature in relation to the tourist's behavior: who has greater caution when deciding how much, where, and how to travel.

Both destinations and companies engaged in tourism must adapt in order to respond to new scenarios by modifying their strategies, since the massive hegemonic tourism model is in question and health security is an even more important attribute than it already was. It has been resigned what involves tourism, promoting proximity tourism and the emergence of alternative tourism development. Therefore, the challenge would be to consolidate tourism modalities that consider in addition to the economic factor, social and environmental aspects (Fraiz Brea and Tarrés Falcó, 2020; Flores Vázquez, 2021).

Local tourism proposals are considered as an opportunity to reactivate tourism activity (Beni, 2020; César Dachary, 2020; Delgado del Castillo, 2020; Martínez Quintana, 2020; Rondón García, 2020) and, also, as an instrument to compensate for the loss of income from international tourism (Araújo Vila and Toubes, 2020; Hall et al, 2020; Simó et al 2020;), encouraging a strategy in which a greater integra-

tion of the tourist with the territory and its values prevails; (Pitarch Garrido, 2020 and Palomo Ortega et al, 2020).

Consistent with the above paragraph, Izcara and Cañadas (2020) refer to the concept staycation by virtue of the trend of holidays at home and manifest when investigating the literature, that there are two definite positions on it:

"The first refers to a holiday period in which instead of going on a trip you stay at home. Here, excursions to nearby destinations and leisure activities would be included, but staying at the usual residence (Breslow, 2019; Fox, 2009; Moltz, 2009; De Bloom et al., 2016; Heimtun, 2017). In the second position, they are considered a practice of proximity tourism and, therefore, would include overnight stays in tourist accommodation in nearby localities or in second residences (Bronner and Hoog, 2013; James et al., 2017; Yesawich, 2010)" (Izcara and Cañadas, 2020: s/p)".

Added to the above, trends indicate that it would be important to cultivate the concept of regenerative tourism (Vargas Sánchez, 2020) not only as a regenerator of the environment but also as a regenerator of the tourist after the period of confinement, who will seek to have contact with nature, the outdoors and with other people, but without falling into the agglomeration. These aspects are valued positively and will benefit the destinations that own them.

Although tourism has shown a high degree of resilience, rapidly recovering from the negative impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic and becoming an engine of overall economic recovery, its effects should not be underestimated. It is, therefore, necessary to address the impact of the crisis on domestic tourism because it constitutes the largest share of international tourism and its ability to compensate for the loss of revenue from international tourism (Hall, 2010).

Demand, resilience and competitive advantages of the tourism sector

Studying the demand of a tourist destination is important because its analysis allows the design of proposals to improve the satisfaction of the needs and desires of the tourist. The tourist demand includes the goods and services that travelers consume during their stay, among the main ones can be mentioned: transport, accommodation, catering, leisure activities and recreation. In this way, it can be argued as mentioned by Narváez and Fernández (2010), that tourist demand analyzes the characteristics of visi-

tors and tourists according to the segment to which they belong, the level of satisfaction with the attractions of the destination, tourism spending, among others.

Mochón (2004) affirms that the desires that people have to consume tourism shapes the tourist demand, which confronts what the authors say Parra and Calero (2006) which argue that the demand approach starts from visitors consumers of goods and services, typical of tourism activities as for other activities.

Therefore, destinations that do not meet the demands of travelers, granting the expected experiences, risk being excluded from the sector (Vargas, 2005).

Establishing the competitiveness of a tourist destination is a complex task since it requires combining diverse elements that are sometimes not easy to measure. For a destination to be competitive, it must have competitive and comparative advantages, or, in other words, it must have a wide variety of resources and products managed effectively and efficiently in the medium and long term (Castro, Giraldi and Galina, 2014; Domareski-Ruiz et al., 2015).

The competitive advantages are influenced by the characteristics of the territorial context (environmental, landscape, and cultural) and include the environments that determine the perception of tourists regarding image, quality, satisfaction, and competitiveness of the service infrastructure (Murphy et al., 2000). They include access and travel infrastructure, accommodation and catering, tourist attractions, leisure, entertainment and shopping.

In relation to comparative advantages refer to the ability to use in the long term, or not, the resources of a destination and are achieved by offering tourists satisfactory experiences, achieving their loyalty (Castro, Giraldi and Galina, 2014; Carmona, Costa and Ribeiro, 2014).

When achieving tourism competitiveness, important aspects should be considered such as: local culture, availability of recreational activities, reception of the local population, tourist safety, price level and shopping options (Reitsamer et al., 2016; Cracolici and Nijkamp, 2009) as well as environmental and landscape aspects (Murphy et al., 2000; Cracolici and Nijkamp, 2009).

According to Estevão and Nunes (2015), the experience of

tourists is related to the characteristics of the destination, influenced by perceived and therefore subjective aspects. Thus, Ayikoru (2015) states that, if a person travels to a destination motivated by its environment and landscape, it will tend not to return if it perceives predation or poor visual quality.

In reference to the concept of resilience, it can be said that it constitutes the ability of individuals to overcome crises successfully. His study has been approached by psychology adding later, other disciplines. It is important to delve into the resilience that tourist destinations may have, given the possibility of natural disasters, weather, economic events, war, or terrorist attacks. This concept then emerged to describe and explain the reasons why some cities that suffered crises and/or disasters, managed to revitalize their economy and renew spaces, while other cities could not achieve (Ponce et al., 2018). Tourist destinations must be able to resist the changes that the environment gives them, responding adequately to adverse situations, with the intervention of local actors (public and private) who participate in the activity.

When analyzing the existing literature, it is noticed that resilience is a complex and subjective phenomenon, resulting in an ambiguous, imprecise and operative concept, which leads to various authors (Pérez y Hernández, 2018; Gutiérrez Vega, 2018; Ponce; Civitaresi y del Valle Colino, 2019) affirm that there are disagreements about the best mechanisms for their measurement.

Martin et al. (2016) in carrying out resilience studies, identify four stages considering the depth, nature, and duration of the disturbance, which influences the scale and duration of its effects on the(s) economy(s):

- 1) vulnerability or risk of firms, institutions, and workers to shock, understood as the sensitivity or propensity of a region to different types of disturbances;
- 2) the initial impact of the disturbance;
- 3) adaptive reorientation (or robustness), i.e., the ability to adjust and adapt to restore key functions and performances;
- 4) the recoverability or renewal (Martin, 2012), which includes the degree and nature of the recovery and the characteristics of the development path towards which the territory recovers.

As argued by Hernández Martín (2020), the challenge has emerged to move towards strengthened governance of

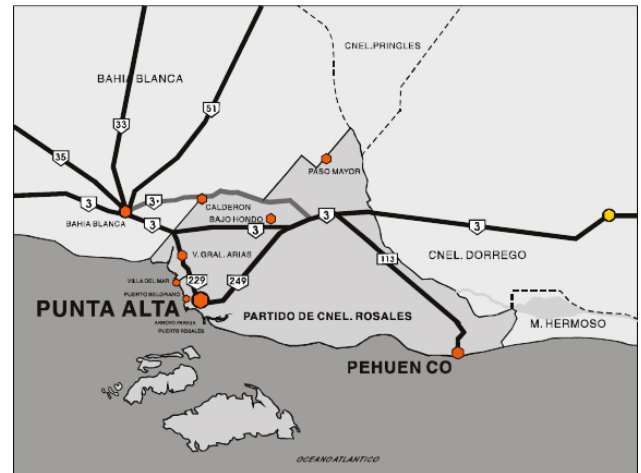
tourism activity with the aim of addressing the effects of the pandemic, but without discarding the agenda in terms of sustainability and the incorporation of knowledge in decision-making. It aims to activate knowledge by creating synergies that can align administrations and agents in the same direction. Likewise, Pitarch-Garrido (2020) asserts that, like all crises, this can also be considered an opportunity.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Characterization of the location of the locality

Pehuen C6 is located in the 38° 59' 51" latitude South and 61° 36' longitude West, on the Atlantic coast southwest of the province of Buenos Aires, 650 km from the Federal Capital, 86 km from Bahía Blanca, and 68 km from Punta Alta, capital of the Coronel de Marina Leonardo Rosales party, Province of Buenos Aires, to which it belongs. The entrance to the spa is done by Provincial Route N°113/2, which connects with the National Route N°3. (Figure 1).

Figure 1. Geographical location of the Coronel Rosales and Pehuen C6



Source: Fucile, G. (2008)

This urban nucleus, whose name comes from the Araucanian language meaning pine and water, was founded on December 16, 1948 by Don Avelino González Martínez. It has all its unpaved streets and most of them very forested mainly with pines and eucalyptus, it is located in an irregular plane at 15 meters above sea level, on the ledge known as Punta Pehuen C6, located on the urban center and its development is parallel to the coast which has an orientation East - West. The highest buildings do not exceed three floors and the houses have a garden or park around them (Figure 2).

Figure 2. Photograph street Rosales and Fragata Sarmiento, Pehuen C6



Source: author (2021)

According to the National Census of Population, Households and Housing (2010) of the National Institute of Statistics and Censuses (INDEC), Coronel Rosales' party has 62,152 inhabitants. According to data provided by the Directorate of Tourism of Coronel Rosales, currently, Pehuen C6 has 900 permanent inhabitants who are added, mainly in the summer, thanks to the presence of residents who have a second residence in the resort and tourists and visitors, about 20,000 (Coronel Rosales Tourist Board, 2021), before the emergence of the COVID-19.

The beach is approximately 10 km long and 143 meters wide (Figure 3), at the top of which is a group of low dunes and at the bottom is a fossiliferous deposit (Bustos, 2012). The beaches present sediments composed of fine sand in the spa sector (Bustos, Piccolo and Perillo, 2011). In the vicinity of the coast, they reach a height of 10 m approximately with unripe dunes, dunes covered by tamarisks (*Tamarixgallica*), cat's claw and endemic species such as the *Neosparton Darwinii*, artificial cliffs and cemented sand outcrops (Calo et al., 1998; Bustos, 2012).

Figure 3. Pehuen C6 beach



Source: author (2021)

Below the sandy beach is a clayey platform that has fossil traces of the Pleistocene, which are exposed at low tide (Figure 4). In the western sector, the cliffs predominate

and towards the east the dunes.

Figure 4. Photograph Photograph of traces of Glyptodonte



Source: author (2021)

In the populated areas introduced vegetation such as pines, tamarisks, eucalyptus, ash, elm, aromatic, among others.

The temperate climate predominates with an annual average temperature of 14.6° C. The sea water temperature averages 21° C, which makes it next to the town of Monte Hermoso, the warmest waters of the Buenos Aires coast. The summer and winter seasons differ well thermally, the months from April to August have an average temperature of 10°C. Summer is hot and the average temperature for the months of September to March is 19°C (Bustos et al., 2011). With regard to rainfall, they occur in spring-summer and autumn, being minimal in winter.

It has been noted that the spa has no industrial sector and the commercial sector is small, with few businesses open all year.

Regarding the development of tourist activity in Pehuén C6, sun and beach tourism represents the most important economic activity. Several studies have been carried out in the town regarding various aspects of tourism, among which we can mention: analysis of the tourist potential of its supply and demand (Cutidiano, 2010; Bustos and Piccolo, 2012), resurfacing the access route to the town (Sánchez, 2010; Santarelli and Campos, 2013), tourism of second residence (Larreche, 2015), ecological tourism (Bartelucci, 1994; Del Pozo et al., 2000), cultural (Ausili, 2005), scientific (Fucile, 2008; Giulietti, 2010; D'Amato, 2011) and rural (Bustos et al., 2016).

Pehuen C6 has a varied tourist-recreational offer, based on its natural and cultural tourist attractions, as well as the tourist plant and available equipment that can be enjoyed

by tourists, visitors and second residents during their stay. Thanks to its wide beaches, the warm waters and the existence of extensive dunes, it is suitable for various activities such as sport fishing, kitesurfing, windsurfing, kayaking, horseback riding, trekking, cycling and ecotourism. It also has various cultural attractions, scheduled events and sporting and theatrical shows. A summary of these can be seen in Table 1 considering the classification proposed by Boullón (1985), which is based on the Center for Tourism Research and Training and the Organization of American States (CICATUR - OEA).

Table 1: Tourist Attractions of Pehuen C6

Tourist attractions		
Categories	Subcategories	
Natural	Natural sites	Beach
		Enchanted forest
	Museums and cultural events, testimony of past cultures	Provincial Geological Reserve, Paleontological, Archaeological Pehuen C6 -Monte Hermoso Natural Provincial "Pehuen Co - Monte Hermoso"
		Paleontological Interpretation Room "Florentino Ameghino"
Cultural		Theme park "Plaza Carrasco"
		Sunken ship
		Boat house
	Folklore and popular and spontaneous architecture	Mill house
		Chapel "The Holy Family"
		"La boya"
Scheduled events		Municipal nursery "Pablo Gunther Lorentz"
		Artisan fair
		National Meeting of Sculptors
		Party until the sun comes up
		Party of the Meeting
		Party at sea and countryside
		Competition "Tria Adventure"
		Sport fishing contest

Source: author (2021)

The spa has hotel accommodation (aparts hotel, hotel) and extra-hotel accommodation (large second homes, rental cabins and campsites) and basic services for both the permanent population and tourists. For general infrastructure and equipment, see Table 2 and 3 respectively.

Table 2: General infrastructure of Pehuen C6

Basic services	Features	Borrowers
Light	Coverage throughout the locality	CEPA
Water	The second phase of installation of the running water network in the central area of the town. Extraction of water for human consumption through wells by pumps	SPAR
Gas	gas packaged in bottles or tubes is used	
Residue recollection	Constant collection. There are clean points with three identified pockets for plastics, paper and cardboard, and glass and aluminum	Municipality of Coronel Rosales
Accessibility	From the National Route 3 that connects with the Provincial Route 113/2, which is in perfect condition and with an optimal signage. Existence of a "La Soberana" rubble road used by rural workers and tourists to travel to and from Monte Hermoso	
Ground transportation	A bus company provides services all year, the tour connects Punta Alta, Bajo Hondo, Bahía Blanca and Pehuen C6. Taxis and remises also operate	Puntal Tour
Communications	Cable TV and internet service Telephone exchange and three cell phone antennas. 4G service FM local	Pehuen C6 Diffuser Movistar Radio Mas repeater
Education	Kindergarten No. 915 Pehuen C6 Provincial School N°. 18 Francisco N. Laprida Technical Education School N°. 1 Pehuen C6 Annex	

Source: author (2021)

Table 3: Equipment of Pehuen C6

	Features	Borrowers	
Hotel Accommodation	470 places		
	hotel aparts	Oasis Apart Hotel, Terrazas Apart Hotel, Alojamiento Pehuen	
	hotel	Cumelcán	
	3000 seats		
Non-hotel accommodation	Campsites	Don Horacio, Enchanted Forest, UNS, Union of Municipal Workers of Punta Alta, ATE, Road, Gas Industry Workers Union, La Costa	
	second homes, cabins, departments		
	5 fast food outlets	El Patio Cerveceros y Súper Pancho, Buena Vida, Rey Lomo, The Festival Food & Beer Truck, UP Beer & Food	
	1 delicatessen	Los Abuelos	
	4 hostels	Eco Hub de Playa, "El Estacionamiento", Occasus, Punto Oeste	
	10 restaurants	Darwin Marisquería, Dino Tenedor Libre, Dos Banderas Parrilla, Kankawe, La Toscana, La Tranquera, Monte Verde Marisquería, Papo Resto Bar, Varela Vareleta, Zona Verde	
	2 breweries	Barone, Normandía	
	1 pastry shop	Dulce Any	
	Recreation	Danceable bowling, zoom of the Development Society, covered patio of School No. 18 (capacity 60 people), multipurpose room of the Sagrada Familia Chapel with (capacity 90 people), Shopping promenade with 4 stands: sale of handicrafts, video games, beach store and resto-bar, Craftsmen's Fair, Florentino Ameghino paleontological interpretation room	
		37 shops (kiosks, self-service stores, ice cream parlors, pharmacy), Public bath batteries, 6 control towers for lifeguards, Tourist Office, service station, a mechanical workshop and a tire shop, medical room	

Source: author (2021)

The tourist facilities on the beach are scarce and precarious: the parador "Punto Oeste" has a sector of tents. In the Paleontological Reserve areas 2 and 3, which belong to the town, have boxes for rangers, but there are no marked trails.

In relation to connectivity to the villa it was found, thanks to the study conducted by Santarelli and Campos (2013), that the resurfacing of the access road made in 2010 has meant an increase in the flow of tourism, demand for accommodation and, simultaneously, an increase in the offer of this service in both quantity and diversity.

Analysis of the tourist demand of Pehuen C6

The data provided by the Coronel Rosales Tourism Directorate allowed us to make a comparative table in order to observe the behavior of the various variables consulted from the 2015-2016 season to the 2020-2021 season (Table 4).

Table 4: Comparison of survey variables, seasons 2016-2021, Pehuen C6

Variable		Percentages						
		2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	Dif. 20/21
Group type	Families	56%	59%	51%	60%	62%	72%	10%
	Couples	29%	21%	20%	25%	19%	17%	-2%
	Friends	12%	13%	15%	10%	12%	7%	-5%
	Alone	3%	7%	14%	5%	7%	4%	-3%
Group composition	2 people	33%	30%	35%	33%	28%	24%	-4%
	4 people	21%	20%	19%	20%	21%	30%	9%
	3 people	14%	20%	18%	19%	19%	25%	6%
	5 people	12%	10%	9%	10%	13%	8%	-5%
	1 people	3%	6%	14%	5%	7%	3%	-4%
	6 people	8%	6%	3%	5%	5%	2%	-3%
	+ than 7 people	6%	3%	1%	4%	5%	5%	0%
	7 people	3%	5%	1%	4%	2%	3%	1%
	Average	4	3	3	3	4	4	
Origin	Buenos Aires	72%	76%	80%	76%	75%	82%	7%
	Bahía Blanca	28%	34%	44%	39%	29%	49%	20%
	Punta Alta	16%	20%	20%	19%	28%	23%	-5%
	Rest Southwest	S/D	S/D	6%	7%	3%	3%	-4%
	Interior rest B.A.	15%	15%	5%	6%	6%	3%	-3%
	C.A.B.A.	8%	5%	2%	4%	3%	1%	-2%
	G.B.A.	5%	3%	3%	2%	2%	3%	1%
	Cuyo (La Rioja, San Juan, San Luis, Mendoza)	3%	2%	1%	2%	3%	3%	0%
	Center (Córdoba)	2%	3%	2%	2%	3%	1%	-2%
	Patagonia (La Pampa, NQN, RN, Sta. Cruz, TDF)	19%	15%	15%	17%	18%	13%	-5%
	Coast (S. Fé, E.R, Ctes, Misiones, Chaco, Formosa)	3%	2%	1%	25	1%	1%	0%
	North (Jujuy, Salta, Sgo. del E., Tucumán, Catamarca)	1%	1%	1%	1%	0%	0%	0%
Stay	2 a 5 días	50%	25%	33%	34%	38%	32%	-6%
	1 día	17%	36%	29%	30%	32%	15%	-17%
	6 a 10 días	17%	24%	18%	21%	17%	20%	3%
	11 a 15 días	5%	6%	5%	5%	5%	12%	7%
	Más de 30 días	3%	4%	7%	4%	4%	7%	3%
	21 a 30 días	6%	4%	5%	4%	3%	10%	7%
	16 a 20 días	25	2%	3%	2%	1%	4%	3%
Consumption at the destination	Tourist	S/D	S/D	83%	65%	77%	S/D	
	Hiker	S/D	S/D	11%	16%	15%	S/D	
	2° resident	S/D	S/D	6%	19%	8%	S/D	
Would he return next season?	Yes	S/D	95%	97%	96%	96%	S/D	
	No	S/D	1%	1%	1%	1%	S/D	
	Doesn't know	S/D	4%	2%	3%	3%	S/D	
Would I go back out of season?	Yes	S/D	58%	66%	53%	60%	S/D	
	No	S/D	26%	26%	31%	27%	S/D	
	Doesn't know	S/D	17%	8%	16%	13%	S/D	
Reason for choice of destination	Beach	64%	40%	73%	75%	60%	S/D	
	Tranquility	55%	70%	71%	72%	59%	S/D	
	Proximity	25%	30%	49%	42%	45%	S/D	
	Own home	S/D	11%	18%	20%	17%	S/D	
	Friends	14%	8%	22%	13%	13%	S/D	
	Family		14%	26%	19%	12%	S/D	
	Security	S/D	9%	24%	18%	7%	S/D	
	Economic	2%	8%	23%	8%	6%	S/D	
	Other	14%	10%	2%	10%	5%	S/D	
	Work	S/D	S/D	5%	4%	4%	S/D	
	Footprints	S/D	S/D	7%	3%	3%	S/D	
	Fishing	S/D	S/D	8%	3%	1%	S/D	
Did it meet your expectations?	Yes	S/D	97%	95%	80%	88%	S/D	
	No	S/D	-	-	17%	9%	S/D	
	Doesn't know	S/D	3%	5%	3%	3%	S/D	

		Scores						Dif. Average 20/21
Quality in services	Oficina de turismo y stand de informes	9,13	9,01	8,80	8,13	8,47	S/D	-0,24
	Alojamiento	S/D	8,10	8,05	8,06	8,07	S/D	0,00
	Atractivos turísticos	9,06	8,75	8,45	8,26	8,06	S/D	-0,46
	Gastronomía	S/D	7,96	7,86	7,97	8,80	S/D	-0,10
	Seguridad	7,39	8,73	8,72	8,27	7,77	S/D	-0,41
	Entretenimientos (actividades culturales y recreativas)	S/D	8,44	7,59	7,47	7,58	S/D	-0,19
	Centro de compras (supermercados y artesanos)	S/D	7,83	7,45	7,39	7,50	S/D	-0,04
	Comunicaciones	S/D	6,44	6,23	5,84	6,78	S/D	0,46
	Contaminación (cuidado ambiental)	S/D	8,04	7,15	7,17	6,71	S/D	-0,56
	Transporte de media distancia	S/D	7,45	7,52	7,33	6,69	S/D	-0,56
	Cartelería y señalización (urbana y rutas)	8,03	7,60	7,31	6,46	5,81	S/D	-1,23
	Iluminación	S/D	6,46	6,24	5,52	5,56	S/D	-0,39
	Baños públicos (limpieza e higiene)	S/D	6,99	5,40	5,20	5,17	S/D	-0,52
	Cajero automático	S/D	7,65	5,19	6,03	4,15	S/D	-1,61
PROMEDIO	S/D	7,82	7,28	7,08	6,87	S/D	-0,4	

Source: author (2021) Own elaboration based on Coronel Rosales Tourism Directorate

The result of the surveys reveals that most of the people who chose Pehuen C6 as a destination had a stay of 2 to 5 days being the type of family predominant, consisting of 2 people. Then, the recreationists are located, that is, those who only came to spend the day (usually Saturdays or Sundays). The average of the analyzed seasons shows a group of between 3 and 4 people.

The main place of origin corresponded to the province of Buenos Aires where the cities of Bahía Blanca and Punta Alta stand out, although visitors from other municipalities of the interior and even other provinces predominated the Patagonia region, which marks the role of the resort as a regional, provincial and/or national resource.

In the period 2020-2021, a negative variation was observed in the vast majority of variables, however, the number of visitors from the province of Buenos Aires, especially from Bahía Blanca, increased. This situation could be explained by the outbreak of the pandemic, which caused the election of Pehuen C6 for its proximity and favorable conditions for the development of tourist activities.

The main motivations for visitors to the resort were the beach, the search for tranquility, and proximity. In relation

to the expense that people make on the destination, it is the tourists who spend the most, followed by hikers and, finally, the second residents.

The query to visitors about whether their expectations regarding the destination were met, an average of 90% answered affirmatively so also on whether they would return to Pehuén Co the following summer season, above 95% answered yes in all the analyzed seasons. Also, the average 59% of respondents said they would return after the high season. These results show a positive change in demand regarding the view of the resort as a tourist attraction. The knowledge of the characteristics of the demand that Pehuen C6 meets helps to diversify its tourist offer. Therefore, it is feasible to diversify the offer of sun and beach to other activities that point, for example, to paleontological or sports tourism; especially during the times of the year in which it is not possible, for meteorological reasons, to enjoy the sun and the beach during the whole stay planned by the tourist (García Sánchez and Alburquerque García, 2003).

Finally, with regard to the quality of services when performing an average of the scores collected in all the analyzed seasons and then, a comparison with the last summer sea-

son, negative results are observed in most of the variables, except in accommodation and communications, yielding an average result of -0.4. This allows us to know the key points to improve, in order to achieve a better positioning and competitive advantages in the post-pandemic tourism context. It is clear from the surveys that the service of ATMs should be optimized, signage and signage both urban and on the routes, the environmental care of the spa, medium distance transport, entertainment and attractions especially on unfavorable weather days in which it is not possible to perform outdoor activities, as well as cleaning and hygiene of public bathrooms.

CONCLUSIONS

In the face of events such as the COVID-19 pandemic, creativity can be used as a way to find new ways of acting that respond to the challenges posed by the conjuncture. In the present context, tourism is one of the sectors most affected, not only by the absolute brake on activity during the peak of the pandemic, but by the very concept of mobility and human relationship that tourism implies.

In addition to the restrictions introduced from the health point of view, we must add the consequences of the economic recession and the fear of moving away from the areas of the comfort of users, which are and will undoubtedly continue to be present. This scenario caused local/regional tourism to converge a series of circumstances that could reverse, at least partially, the consequences of this crisis, and that the return to "normalcy" is more accelerated.

The current conditions of tourism activity are changing towards prospects for greater appreciation of sustainable tourism products, a trend towards proximity travel and a rationalization of travel, as people in their search for rest and enjoyment are opting for places further away from the big urban centers, surrounded by nature and with minimal agglomeration.

Given this general scenario, it can be assumed that at least this time, domestic tourism, whether local or regional, in this case, that of the town of Pehuen C , presented greater possibilities to increase its activity than other tourist segments (for example, congress and convention tourism, group travel, cruises, business travel, and urban tourism). Among the reasons that can support this statement considering the analysis (Hall, 2010; Izcara and Ca adas,

2020; Vargas S nchez, 2020) of the literature and destination, can be highlighted: a position of proximity to the issuing points such as Bah a Blanca and Punta Alta, what can encourage demand to select Pehuen C  for reasons of security and tranquility; being tourism developed in a low population density environment; developing largely outdoors and in open spaces (beaches, squares, forest, nursery, reserve); having good ground accessibility thanks to the resurfacing of the access road in 2010; having a good image as a healthy and sustainable product.

This may give the resort under study not only a comparative advantage in overcoming the crisis more quickly but also an opportunity to reposition itself in the market. However, in order for this to occur, it is necessary to consider, when applying preventive measures and the control of possible contagion, the special characteristics of the vast majority of services linked to tourism, ensuring maximum prevention of regrowth, this being the priority that should predominate in all actions currently implemented as in possible future scenarios.

The analysis of the demand shows that certain points must be strengthened in order to meet the new demands that passengers will have since the current health crisis, such as greater environmental care, hygiene of public spaces and medium-distance public transport, among the most relevant.

By way of closure, it is important to highlight that the pandemic produced by the COVID-19 could constitute an opportunity to revalue tourist spaces of proximity, which present proposals focused on the development of creative, sustainable, and responsible tourism.

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