

Valuation of the spatial characteristics of rural tourism in Gran Canaria, Spain*

Santana-Jiménez, Yolanda (ysantana@dmc.ulpgc.es)

Suárez-Vega, Rafael (rsuarez@dmc.ulpgc.es)

Hernández, Juan M. ** (jhernandez@dmc.ulpgc.es)

Department of Quantitative Methods in Economy

University of Las Palmas de Gran Canaria

***Corresponding author*

Abstract. The characteristics of the environment surrounding rural houses naturally affect the affluence of rural tourist to the destination. In particular, this paper estimates the influence of some spatial variables in the rental prices of rural houses in Gran Canaria, Spain, by using a hedonic prices model. Geographic information systems (GIS) data are used to measure the spatial attributes associated with the house, such as the land use and the population in a given neighbourhood of the house. Other factors traditionally included in hedonic models are also analysed, such as the structural characteristics of the house and distance to some amenities and points of interest. Spatial econometrics was applied to analyse the geographic correlation of rental prices. Results indicate that environmental diversity and remoteness positively affect prices. These findings permits to obtain an estimation of the economic value of the nature preservation and are useful for policy makers and local population to debate and plan the future development of the nowadays incipient industry.

1. INTRODUCTION

Unlike other countries in Europe with longer tradition, rural tourism in Spain started to develop significantly at the beginning of the 80's (Cánoves et al. 2004). A sustained growth in the number of rural houses supplied has been observed since two decades and has been accelerated in last years. Specifically, from 5.497 rural houses registered in the annual statistics of 2001, 13.592 are presented in 2009, what means an average annual growth of 12% (INE, 2009). The flourishing of rural accommodations has been aimed by governmental programs to revitalise the countryside economy and diversify the national tourist industry, based mainly in

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