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VOLUNTARY TOURISM IN RURAL SPACES IN CURITIBA, PARANÁ, BRAZIL

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ABSTRACT

The displacement for voluntary work on rural properties is a form of voluntourism in rural areas. Thus, this article aimed to elucidate the main characteristics of voluntourism in rural properties which work with organic agriculture. For that a qualitative research was conducted with organic products farmers who work with voluntourism in the metropolitan region of Curitiba, Paraná, Brazil and a quantitative research with volunteers. The results showed that the respect to the conduct rules is essential in the rural properties that work with voluntourism. In terms of divulgation, WWOOF (World Wide Opportunities on Organic Farms) is not the only way to act and promote voluntourism in rural areas and respondents identified that there are some flaws in the service offered by this organization. From the surveyed volunteers it was found that the activity attracts mainly young people with university experience. It was concluded that if voluntourism receives more attention from researchers, farmers and public power it has the potential to become an alternative source of income in rural areas and a differentiated tourism product, especially for

its intensity in the exchange of knowledge between tourists and rural producers.

KEYWORDS

Rural voluntourism, Organic agriculture, Sustainability, Brazil

ECONLIT KEYS

Z320; Q01; Z130

1 INTRODUCTION

The volunteer work was strongly influenced by Christianity during the Middle Ages, as those excluded from society, such as wanderers, beggars and the sick, were seen by the church as a way to practice charity, which is considered a Christian virtue (Curado & Menegon, 2009). In Brazil, volunteering is regulated by the Law 9,608, February 18th, 1998. This considers voluntary service any unpaid activity, performed by an individual to the public entity, which has civic, cultural, educational, scientific, recreational and social objectives or social assistance, including mutuality, not generating employment bond (Brazil, 1998).

Volunteering, as well as other activities from the third sector, in Brazil, are still marginalized and lacking in commitment. However, volunteering when associated to the market, and as a part of a tourist product, gains greater prominence. The voluntary tourism, or voluntourism, is the movement of tourists to places other than their usual surroundings in order to perform voluntary work. It is often related to tourism in urban areas or social issues. But there is another possibility, which can be voluntary tourism in rural areas. When people talk about tourism in rural areas, they already think on ethnic itineraries and other activities in the countryside and also related to farm hotels, where the guest goes to rest and not to think about work. But voluntary tourism in rural areas means giving time and work which is exchanged for accommodation, food and especially for a rural experience.

In the voluntourism in rural areas, it is highlighted the operation of WWOOF (World Wide Opportunities on Organic Farms). This is an organization that aims to connect organic farms that need volunteer labor to people who want to be a volunteer in these places. WWOOF provides property data and characteristics to the volunteers so they can choose among the best destination options.

The properties registered in WWOOF Brazil show several kinds of production, such as livestock, planting herbs, cultivation of vegetables, fruits, planting coconuts,

cocoa, corn, coffee, sugar cane, *açaí*, mushrooms, grains processing and cultivation of eucalyptus.

Abroad the voluntourism in organic rural properties is already widespread. In Brazil this practice is very recent. WWOOF has approximately two hundred properties registered in Brazil. There are experiences of rural voluntourism in all country regions (South, Southeast, Midwest, Northeast and North), including the metropolitan region of Curitiba.

According to the data available in WWOOF Brazil (2020), the South Region is the second with the highest concentration of voluntourism properties in the country (24%) located geographically next to the Southeast Region which has the largest amount of voluntary properties, with 50% of the total. Therefore, these two regions make up a continuous area that concentrates 74% of voluntourism in Brazil. In the other regions, the voluntourism properties are in a less expressive number with 15% in the Northeast Region, 11% in the Midwest Region and just a property in the North Region. More specifically, Paraná State has 10 voluntourism properties registered in the WWOOF Brazil (2020), and five of them are located in the Metropolitan Region of Curitiba.

Despite this context, rural voluntourism still receives little attention in the national and international literature, highlighting the work of Zavitz & Butz (2011), Alvarez (2012), Miller & Mair (2015), Deville *et al.* (2016). Yamamoto & Engelstedb (2014) emphasize the need of performing similar studies in other countries with WWOOF host farmers. Only in the last two decades has the subject of rural volunteering related to tourism received more visibility from researchers, considering the major publications on the issue. It should be noted that most of these publications are in international journals, with considerable scarcity on the subject in Portuguese.

Therefore, the following research question arises: what are the main obstacles related to offer and demand of rural voluntourism in organic rural properties that deserve more attention from researchers of rural areas? These questions arise due to the scarcity of research related to the topic, precisely because it is a new subject in the academic environment. There is still no scientific knowledge on the problems that exist in the practice of voluntourism in rural areas, as those related to demand as to the offer. In order to answer this problem, the aim of this paper was to elucidate the main characteristics of the voluntourism in rural properties which explore organic agriculture, analyzing how the owners prepare their properties, leaving them

receptive to the voluntourist. The specific objectives were: to discuss the offer of services provided by the properties that work with voluntourism; to reflect on the profile of the volunteer that are looking for these properties; and to present the challenges linked to the offer and demand of this kind of voluntourism.

Then, the main objective of this paper is to increase the search on the issue, encouraging new researchers and scholars to write about voluntourism in rural areas, since due to the expansion of the practice in several countries, it is possible to say that this factor makes it relevant to the academy.

Thus, following it will be presented the theoretical framework about voluntourism in rural areas in organic properties. The next section is showed the methodological procedures adopted for the research development, followed by the results. Then, there is the final considerations in which the practical and theoretical implications of the work are pointed out as well as the suggestions for future research.

2 RURAL VOLUNTOURISM

In tourism studies, traveling in order to perform volunteer work is called voluntourism, voluntary tourism, or volunteering tourism. Gomes & Magalhães (2013) define voluntourism as journeys that unite knowledge of a culture and volunteer work in favor of those who are inserted in it. In other words, the person donates the work exchanging for experience, knowledge and culture.

The voluntourism is a way of uniting people from different social classes and ethnicities, all with the aim of doing good things, sharing culture and non-profit experiences (Nascimento, 2012). The first volunteer experiences on farms date back to the 1970s by people who donated their work in exchange of lodging and food (Maycock, 2008). Álvarez (2012) says that the expectations of farmers who work with voluntourism and volunteers are still similar, because, they are related to work, food, accommodation and learning. In addition to it, the voluntary tourism is presented as an important propose for the market in the coming years, due to its sustainable practices, thus benefiting tourism, the environment and the community (Mendes & Sonaglio, 2013).

The tourism can be an economic alternative for rural residents, as part of the transformations that have been taking place in rural areas (Nitsche & Neri, 2014).

According to Fino (2010), tourism in rural environment is a complementary activity to the main one, an income increase, in other words, the rural property has its main activity, with different crops or creations and it adopts rural tourism as a second alternative of income.

As Candiotta (2013) argues, leisure and tourism in rural areas set a context of pluriactivity, that is, the expansion of agricultural and non-agricultural activities that can be developed in a property. The pluriactivity, in this turn, contributes to the economic sustainability of family farmers. However, Choo & Jamal (2009) warn that diversification coming with the tourism should not be perceived as a panacea for farmers that are fighting against the impacts of globalization and the international free trade policies. According to the authors, before adopting tourism diversification strategies, the social, cultural, economic and environmental changes and the necessary commitments to ensure the survival of small rural organic producers should be evaluated. Oliveira & Diniz (2018) studying rural tourism in Portugal find that in rural areas there are innovative tourism products that contribute to endogenous development and provide creative experiences for tourists, with their involvement in activities offered by the community. Hurst & Niehm (2016) observed that competitive advantage in rural settings involves longer-term relationship with residents and catering to the tourist customers' needs.

Tulik (2003) argues that the term rural tourism is used indiscriminately, referring to any activity performed in the rural environment. However, is characteristic of voluntourism in rural areas the relationship of tourism with the organic system of agricultural production, which in Brazil, according to Law n. 10,831, December 23, 2003, consists of people that adopt: "Specific techniques by optimizing the use of available natural and socioeconomic resources and the respect to the cultural integrity of rural communities, with the aim of economic and ecological sustainability, maximizing social benefits, minimizing dependence on non-renewable energy, employing, whenever possible, cultural, biological and mechanical methods" (Brazil, 2003).

As highlighted by Mendonça (2006), rural tourism should be based on the appreciation and conservation of historical characteristics of properties, the preservation of human values and sustainable rural development. Petrzalka *et al.* (2005) further emphasize that those rural tourism planners must take into account community concerns, especially those about the importance of preserving the local

culture and values and the desire of preserving their rural property. Thus, according to Miranda, Gomes & Nitsche (2012), ecologically based agriculture is, in this sense, a tourist attraction with potential for economy, culture and education in the countryside.

In world terms voluntourism in organic properties has as a relevant agent the WWOOF (World Wide Opportunities Organic Farms) which was created in England in the 1970s by Susan Coppard, under the name of “Weekends Volunteer Work on Organic Farms” (WWOOF, 2016). The focus was to make urban people spending weekends on rural properties in order to gain an interesting experience with lodging and food in exchange for volunteer work (WWOOF). Currently the organization is recognized among the properties of organic agriculture, having branches in more than 50 countries (Terry, 2014).

In Brazil, the WWOOF branch is called WWOOF Brazil and has approximately 220 properties (WWOOF Brazil, 2020). According to data from WWOOF Brazil (2016), the properties that wish to join the program need to work with organic agriculture, have an infrastructure able to receive at least one volunteer and they must have the willingness of teaching cultivation techniques to the interested people, in this case the voluntourists.

The registered properties are varied in terms of size and type of cultivation, ranging from large farms to small properties, but they do not have their name and address, the references are done by codes. It is also noted that the properties are in all regions of the country. The Southeastern and Southern regions of Brazil are respectively those that have the largest number of properties in the WWOOF, highlighting the States of São Paulo, Minas Gerais, Bahia, Rio Grande do Sul and Rio de Janeiro that standing out as the main ones.

Yamamoto & Engelstedb (2014), when analyzing the characteristics of WWOOF properties in the United States (New York State), identified that WWOOF thrives on the fringes of dominant modern agriculture because its farmers are focused on subsistence agriculture. The authors found a tendency for these properties: they are located in more comfortable places, especially with easy access to bohemian and cultural activities, but not in conventional agricultural regions of the country or in areas of high socioeconomic difficulty.

Deville et al. (2016) make a critical analysis about the relationship between the WWOOF, tourism and sustainability. The authors warn of a collision of two spaces,

one of them is the WWOOF's idealism in which workers contribute to sustainability and the other one the tourist characterized by expectation of experience and an economical alternative of vacation and authenticity. According to Deville *et al.* (2016) although the WWOOF is part of an organic farming movement, the people may join it less motivated by organic farming and more for a cheaper form of vacation.

Zavitz & Butz (2012), analyzing the Canadian voluntourism in some organic properties in Costa Rica, put in doubt the real contributions to the social development or environmental sustainability in this "host communities". For the authors there are five aspects that cause the failure of this segment: the hierarchy between the people from the North and the South; the dependence on a tourist infrastructure; the characterization of the farms, specifically for volunteers; the short stay of the volunteers; the disappointment of the volunteers with the experience provided by the trip.

On the other hand, Kosnik (2014), when analyzing the hospitality in the work-for-food and lodging relations of the WWOOF's, notes that both the abuse by the farmer, assigning tasks to the visitor to save money with a paid worker, and by the volunteer, disrespecting the daily life of the farmer's house are exceptions. The author also observes that the typical WWOOF tradeoffs are an example of how people run away from meetings governed by market logic and, instead, the seek for alternatives of new relationships. According to McIntosh & Bonnemann (2006), working hours vary according to the rural property, and may last up to 6 hours per day, and the voluntourists accommodation may vary from 3 days to 6 months, according to the rules of each property and in the interest of the volunteer.

Miller & Mair (2015), when analyzing voluntourists in the organic farms in Argentina, also identified positive aspects. According to the authors, "interconnected living" is a central understanding to understand them. This feeling is underpinned by six horizons of comprehension: reconnecting; exchanging knowledge; experiencing the harmony; bonding with others; awaking; transforming (Miller & Mair, 2015).

Yamamoto & Engelstedt (2014) observed that voluntourists bring useful knowledge to the hosts. But it is possible to find in part of these the appreciation of cheap/flexible labor generated by the volunteers. According to Mostafanezhad (2016), WWOOF host farmers make up a movement of resistance to neoliberal capitalism.

Thus, voluntourism in family and organic properties provides interaction between property owners and voluntourists, respectful relationship with nature as well as the questioning about agrarian practices. Therefore, it constitutes a possibility of encouraging sustainability in rural areas as it integrates the economic, ecological and socio-cultural spheres.

3 METHODOLOGICAL PROCEDURES

This research has qualitative and quantitative characteristics. The qualitative data collection was performed using semi-structured interviews, seeking interaction with the subjects (Alves-Mazzotti & Gewandsznajder, 2001, p. 168) in order to identify the functioning of the properties, the form of receiving the volunteers and the challenges related to voluntourism in rural areas. Two properties were selected, under the criterion of being recognized among the agents as an organic agriculture area, especially in the reception of voluntourists and one of them is registered in the WWOOF. The choice of the survey respondents was mainly because they were professionals recognized for their experience in the hospitality of tourists, including foreigners, received at their properties located in Curitiba and in its metropolitan region, for the activity of rural voluntourism, being well evaluated by the voluntourists. In addition to the availability of the owners to receive the researchers, since other properties, even those affiliated to the WWOOF, refused the invitation for the interview, claiming that they were not interested in the academic contribution.

The second stage of the data collection consisted of sending a closed questionnaire to the voluntourists using three channels: by the social network Facebook, in the communities related to the WWOOF and by email, with a check-list provided by one of the interviewed owners, and personally, with the volunteers who were practicing the activity in the farms. Thus, it was sought to identify the profile and motivations of those who make up the potential demand for rural voluntourism by a non-probabilistic sample, according to the convenience of the respondents.

A total of 28 questionnaires were answered, 13 were considered for the full profile analysis, since they were the ones who had already practiced rural voluntourism in organic farms. The two stages of the research were conducted in the second half of 2016.

The analysis of the interviews was performed from the transcription and categorization of the interviewees' speech seeking to compose relations with the concepts of the theoretical framework, thus confirming some information presented by authors of this issue. It was assigned a code to each respondent in order to preserve their identities. The data collected using the questionnaire were analyzed following the steps of data entry, frequency analysis of the answers and crossing among the variables. Thus, after the coding and tabulating the results, it was possible to answer the problem and the objectives of the work, which are available in the following chapter.

4 RESULTS

The presentation of the results was subdivided into two sections. The first one refers to interviews with the owners and the second corresponds to the questionnaires applied to voluntourists.

4.1) INTERVIEWS WITH THOSE RESPONSIBLE FOR ORGANIC FARMING PROPERTIES

Using two interviews with two well-known organic farm owners who accept voluntourists to stay and work in the metropolitan region of Curitiba, it was addressed the following topics: sustainability, financial return, organic farming, rural properties, adaptation of the property, relationship between voluntourists and other employees, rules, how the idea of volunteering came about. Respondents were named as interviewee A and interviewee B.

The property belonging to the respondent named A cultivates vegetables, fruits and raises poultry. It also has a restaurant that serves paying tourists interested in spending the day at the property. And they all work at the organic products fair in Curitiba. The property of the interviewee identified as B cultivates vegetables, has a beneficiation mill and a kitchen that is specialized in the production of jellies, cakes and cookies, all made with organic products. He and his family also work selling their products at the organic fairs in Curitiba.

About how the idea of accepting volunteers on their property came about, the interviewees explained about their stories. The interviewee A reported being the

pioneer in accepting volunteers to work on his property. He started to work with the agroecology for health reasons, and then he decided to use ancestral cultivation techniques without pesticides, as natural as possible, in order to increase the quality of life of his family. Over the time, consumers themselves became interested in his production methods, and through consumer needs, there was an incentive to accept volunteering on the property. So, as reported by Miranda, Gomes & Nitsche (2012), ecologically based agriculture is really a tourism attraction.

The interviewee B said that this idea became a property project through the interest and encouragement of his son-in-law. With Italian nationality, he was already a registered volunteer in the WWOOF, and he idealized and put into practice the project. The main activities carried out on both A and B properties are: agroecology, agribusiness, tourism, garden cultivation and animal care and processing.

The sustainability is one of the basic precepts for those who work with organic farming and volunteering. In this sense, the interviewees argued that it is present at all stages of their property. But the respondent A added that it is an educational process, so the property offers courses and lectures on the subject, given the importance of educating people for sustainability, especially in the cultivation process. Therefore, differently from what was said by Zavitz & Butz (2012), in the case analyzed here, there is a direct contribution of the voluntourism in the organic properties to the sustainability in the host community.

Regarding the financial return, the respondent A said that quality of life, personal and spiritual satisfaction outweighs money. The interviewee B stated that due to labor savings and other labor taxes, the financial return is increased with the voluntary work. But both do not intend to expand the property in order to receive more tourists.

Related to organic agriculture linked to rural voluntourism, especially due to WWOOF, the respondents confirmed that on their properties all production is organic, but the respondent A said that he had never heard about the institution. According to him, there is a lack of means of divulgation and in order to make the publicity of his property to those interested in practicing voluntourism in rural properties, he uses flyers in organic fairs and uses social networks; he thinks it is important to have support of the public sector.

The interviewee B reported that the WWOOF is an excellent means of dissemination, and its rules are efficient, despite having a bad and disorganized site.

According to him, it is because his son-in-law is a practicing voluntourist and associated to WWOOF. Thus, all the registration was performed by him. The interviewee B also said that lacks organization for the WWOOF Brazil and the arrangement of properties on the site is not appropriate, and the site has little information.

They were asked about the adaptations that they had to make in their properties in order to accept the voluntourist, the interviewee A said that he built a restaurant, accommodation and improved the infrastructure, because besides the voluntourists, the property also receives paying public to do the activities proposed in the rural voluntourism program. The interviewee B said that the changes happened slowly, first he received the tourists in his house, but as time went by, this interaction was disrupting both sides, so he decided to build a house only for voluntourists.

As the rights of the volunteers are ensured, the duties are also a WWOOF rule. Each property has its own rules, according to its needs and the proposal offered to the voluntourists. The respondent A added that in order not to have labor problems, the volunteer signs a volunteer contract, thus guaranteeing their rights and the property security. Both respondent A and B stated that the cooperation and good relationships are present between registered employees and volunteers.

The respondents also said that rules are needed in order to maintain the order and proper functioning in the property. The respondent A reported that the rules are set according to the volunteer's need and the property, and they are adaptable according to the activity that the volunteer wants to perform. However, there is a prohibition that is valid for all who want to stay in the property, related to work in the kitchen, as the restaurant is to serve tourists and other paying people, it is important that there is no variation in the quality of the food offered.

The interviewee B reported that the rules are passed from the beginning. The schedules need to be followed and certain functions must be fulfilled. When the volunteer is undergoing the admission stage, an evaluation form is required, then a Skype interview is conducted to select the volunteers. When there is the approval, one of the owners explains the procedures, functions and rules. The work is evaluated every 15 days, in order to solve the doubts of the volunteers and maintaining the quality of services. The consumption of alcohol and any kind of illicit drugs is prohibited. Must be fluent in English and have a willingness to learn and understand Portuguese. As an internal rule of the property, at the end of their stay,

the voluntourists must prepare a typical dish of their regions, for the final farewell of the property. He accepts non-WWOOF volunteers as long as it is not a stay of less than one week and the maximum is 3 months.

Therefore, even though Kosnik (2014) warned on possible problems in the relationship between rural landowners and voluntourists, what is observed in these cases is the mutual respect. However, it is evident that among the important aspects for this good coexistence, as seen in both cases, is the existence of a house for the voluntourists, different from the owners' house, in addition to the establishment of a prior contract with the rules.

When they were requested to freely express any comments about volunteering on their properties, the respondent A reported about the bureaucracy to work in this field and the lack of support from public agencies. According to him, there is also a lack of people from the tourism area to help with planning and to attract clients and people to execute the projects. The interviewee B explained that volunteering is important for the exchange of experiences. And, expressed his dissatisfaction with the WWOOF Brazil website, mentioning, among the complaints, the fact that it has little information and that the properties are poorly shown. The farmer's observations demonstrate that even though WWOOF has around two hundred properties registered in Brazil, there is an important field of action for the organization and expansion of this activity in the country, especially when considering the territorial extension of Brazil.

The Table 1 summarizes the speech of the interviewees who, as shown below, relate the sustainability, divulgation, WWOOF, privacy, cooperation, standards and the public sector.

Sustainability is a requirement and an attraction for those who work with voluntourism on organic farming properties.
Absence of interest in expanding the number of voluntourists in the property.
Difficulty in make the divulgation of the property to the voluntourists.
The organization WWOOF Brazil could be improved.
Existence of a separate residence for voluntourists.
Cooperation and good relationships are present between registered employees and voluntourists.
Rules are needed in order to maintain the order and proper functioning in the property.
Bureaucracy to work in this field
Lack of support from public agencies.

Table 1. Summary of Interviewees Assessments
Source: Authors

In the following section, the results regarding voluntourism practitioners with a focus on rural areas will be presented.

4.2) QUESTIONNAIRE WITH VOLUNTOURISM PRACTITIONERS

From the analysis of the questionnaires the following results were obtained: 53.6% were women and 46.4% men. Among women 66% had an age range of 18 to 29 years old and 76% of the men had the same age. 92.7% of the interviewed people had at least incomplete higher education and 88.6% had a family income below 7 minimum wages.

Regarding volunteering work, 82.1% of the respondents had already participated, the main reasons were: personal satisfaction (25%), the need to do good (20%) and the search for a fairer society (15 %). Specifically, about voluntourism, 75% said they had already practiced and 53.9% had the last experience of rural voluntourism less than one year ago. Among those who practice voluntourism in rural areas, the destinations mentioned were: Campo Largo and Bocaíuva do Sul (Paraná), Minas Gerais in Brazil and Spain, Germany, Czech Republic and Mexico. The characteristics of the public analyzed in this research point to a possible similarity to those described by Deville et al. (2016), who says that the people may join rural voluntourism less motivated by organic farming and more for a cheaper form of vacation.

Therefore, it can be understood that there are several motivations that can influence the choice of voluntourism practitioners in rural areas, from an economically viable vacation alternative to the choice of having an experience in the countryside. Another motivating factor that stands out is the authenticity of the rural volunteer activity, either due to the sustainability that the properties prioritize or the hospitality, mostly experienced in the family life of the rural owner.

Of the respondents, 38.5% chose organic farming as their main motivating factor and 77% of the respondents chose living and contact with other people. All respondents said they would be again volunteers on farms. As evidence of satisfaction, 99% rated the experience as excellent or very good. Related to the ideal period for the duration of volunteering in rural properties, 46.2% answered that the ideal time is up to 30 days, 30.8% prefer to last from 30 to 90 days and 23.1% think 180 days the ideal. These data differ from the scenario reported by Zavitz & Butz (2012), as the public analyzed is not characterized by the short stay and the disappointment with the experience provided by the trip.

Even there is variation between the periods considered ideal, it can be stated, according to the research, which is 30 or 180 days, almost all respondents who practiced rural voluntourism would certainly do it again. Finally, it is evident that this is a rural tourism aspect that meets the wishes of the tourist, regardless of the motivator.

Linking the results of the survey conducted with the owners and the rural voluntourists who answered the questionnaire online, it can be stated that the activity does not have for those directly involved, the same definition that the researchers of the subject define it. For the owners, this is an activity that benefits them in several aspects, with an emphasis on the economic one, as they have volunteer labor and on the environment, as they share agro-ecological practices. For practitioners, the main definition is related to the practice of a more economically accessible tourist activity and with more diversity of stay, with the possibility of also gathering knowledge with the rural experience.

The Table 2 summarizes the quantitative data on the potential demand for rural voluntourism.

Gender	53.6% women; 46.4% men
Age	66% 18 to 29 years old
Education	92.7% at least incomplete higher education
Income	88.6% below 7 minimum wages
Volunteering work	82.1% had participated
Voluntourism	75% had already practiced
Rural voluntourism	53.9% had already practiced
Main motivating factor	77% contact with other people
Experience satisfaction	99% excellent or very good
Time of voluntourism in rural properties	46.2% up to 30 days

Table 2. Quantitative Data
Source: Authors

In the Table 2 it can be seen that among those who make up the potential demand for rural voluntourism, they are most women, young people, with schooling up to higher education, with a not very high income. Most of them have already practiced other voluntary activities, including on rural properties, and the main motivating factor was the contact with other people, they felt satisfied and I understood that the time of voluntourism in rural areas should not be long.

5 FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

This research aimed to point out the main characteristics of voluntourism in rural properties of organic agriculture, identifying the services provided by the properties, the profile of the volunteer who is looking for the properties and the challenges related to the offer of this kind of voluntourism.

In this sense, the owners interviewed argued that sustainability is a concern present in all stages of the property. The economic aspect is not the main focus on the activity. The WWOOF is not the only way to act and promote voluntourism in rural areas. The organic fairs and social networks are also spaces for attracting these volunteers. The rules are fundamental for the conduction on the part of the voluntourists while in the rural property. However, there are challenges related to bureaucracy and manpower, as well as improvements to the WWOOF Brazil website.

Related to the profile of the rural voluntourist, it was identified among the interviewees that the public with experience in rural voluntourism is young (under 30 years old), in a similar proportion between male and female, with university experience and from middle class. The experience and contact with other people are the most valued aspects and they seek experiences of up to 30 days, and the degree of satisfaction almost full.

As practical implications of the work, there is the need for an instrument, as a mobile app, that more effectively interconnects the rural owner and those interested in practicing rural voluntourism. This tool would help the WWOOF by making properties better publicized, and would provide to the volunteers more accurate data on the intended property for the future practice. The main obstacle in offering rural voluntourism as an alternative activity on their properties is the difficulty of divulgation and the contact with WWOOF. As it is an activity still little known in Brazil, those interested in voluntourism on organic farms, do not know how to get there, what the procedures, then taking so long to gain knowledge about the platform that WWOOF offers.

The theoretical implications permeate the fact that it is a topic still little studied in Brazil, making it a favorable field for future research. Although it is not widespread as a rural tourism aspect, in relation to the amount of research, the amount of properties in Brazil that already work with this segment, show the pertinence to the attention offered to these studies.

The study contributed to the advancement of knowledge about rural tourism, as it works with a less common approach, the rural voluntourism, and even allows

reflections from the results found with international research. It was identified that the ecological aspects and sustainability are relevant issues in order to the understanding of rural voluntourism. The analysis of human interaction issues is important in the researches, especially the existence of rules and privacy in the interaction between hosts and tourists. Likewise, the variations in the characteristics of demand according to their origin are relevant to the analysis of this sector, observing the age of the predominant public, the time of stay and the satisfaction.

As a limitation found during the research, it was identified the low number of bibliographical references on the subject of voluntourism in rural areas. That is why it was necessary to develop a theoretical path that combined some research-related topics, such as volunteering in general, rural tourism and organic agriculture.

Another limitation found during the research refers to the lack of rural voluntourists to answer the survey questionnaire and the use of convenience sampling. Therefore, this study allowed the observance of important conceptual aspects for the analysis of the rural voluntourism, however it is not possible to generalize the results to the universe of farmers and voluntourists.

As a proposal for future research, it is important to analyze rural properties that accept volunteers in other states of Brazil, to survey international experiences, and to identify instruments for the public sector to encourage the activity. The paper also provided a basis for future research.

In relation to the offer of services and profile of the voluntourist, the knowledge of the experience tourism and hospitality area can contribute to the advance of the practice and research of voluntourism in rural areas.

Finally, the research highlighted the importance of rural voluntourism as a tourism segment, even though it still has a long way to develop. If it receives more attention from tourism researchers, farmers and public agencies, it can become a source of income in rural areas and a more consolidated holiday alternative for those who are looking for different destinations and tourism activities.

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