

# INTELLECTUAL OUTPUT 4

## Case Study IO4- Marketing

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### The Profile of the Tourist in the North Alentejo

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Key words: Tourism; Tourist; Consumer; Marketing

#### 1. Summary

This case study analyses the behaviour of the Tourist of the North Alentejo – Portalegre. The development of a tourist destination is strongly dependent on its ability to attract tourists, so it is essential to know the existing demand (effective demand), and whenever possible, to prospect the segments of demand that may be feasible to capture (potential demand).

Knowing the effective tourist demand in Portalegre is, therefore, extremely pertinent, in order to outline strategies of attraction to the territory.

#### 2. Introduction

The term tourism is known for all the activities that human beings perform when they travel and stay in a place outside their usual surroundings with an objective eminently focused on vacation or leisure.

The set of activities carried out by individuals during their travels and stays in places other than those in their usual surroundings for a consecutive period of less than one year is called tourism. Generally, tourist activity is carried out for leisure purposes, although tourism also exists for business reasons (better known for business trips) and other reasons.

The person who leaves his country or region to do one of these types of tourism is known as a "tourist".

Nowadays, tourism is one of the main industries globally. Tourism currently appears as one of the most important economic activities, thus revealing an international dimension. The World Tourism Organization (WTO) defines the tourism sector as the third largest export sector in the world. This strong growth in the tourism sector is due, for example, to factors such as the desire to travel and the ability to be able to do it, to discover new cities, countries, cultures, among others.

The definition of the WTO - World Tourism Organization, which considers tourism as "the set of activities developed by people during trips and stays in places outside their usual environment for a consecutive period that does not exceed one year, for leisure reasons, business and others".

A difference can be made between mass tourism (a group of people grouped by a tour operator) and individual tourism (travellers who decide their activities and itineraries without the intervention of operators).

There are almost as many types of tourism as there are human interests. That said, we can mention cultural tourism (people who travel to see artistic or historical landmarks), consumer tourism (tours organized with the main objective of purchasing products), training tourism (related to studies), gastronomic tourism (for enjoy the traditional food of a specific place), ecological tourism (based on non-invasive contact with nature), adventure tourism (for recreational risk / adventure sports), religious tourism (related to religious events) and even space tourism (a recent business that organizes trips to space). Tourism is an activity of such importance for the economy of a country, region or city. Since the arrival of tourists increases the economy, due to the consumption of local products and services as well. This is the so-called tourism industry.

### 3. Aims

This study seeks to know to know: (i) which aspects are most valued by current visitors, (ii) which are the least satisfactory aspects of the stay / visit, (iii) which are the consumption habits, expectations and motivations of tourists, (iv) which are the sociodemographic profiles and (v) main markets of origin of visitors, among other aspects.

This information will be decisive for the definition of the main lines of intervention to be pursued, and for the identification of the actions that can best respond to the needs and expectations of demand.

## 4. Literature Review

Tourism has come to assume more and more importance, representing good results in the investments made all over the world, which results in the creation of jobs and the possibility of the countries that have this natural and historical-cultural potential to develop great events and businesses aiming at opportunity to enter and compete in the international market.

Tourism, according to the United Nations (UN) and the World Tourism Organization (WTO), is the activity of the traveller who visits a locality outside his usual surroundings, for less than a year, and with a main purpose different from the exercise paid activity by entities of the visited place. The tourist is the individual who makes the tourist trip overnight.

The definition of the WTO - World Tourism Organization, considers tourism as "the set of activities developed by people during trips and stays in places outside their usual environment for a consecutive period that does not exceed one year, for leisure reasons, business and others".

The definition of tourism proposed by the author Ignarra (2003) denotes, unequivocally, the multifaceted nature of this activity: "Tourism is a combination of activities, services and industries that are related to the realization of a trip: transport, accommodation, services food, shops, shows, facilities for various activities and other receptive services available to individuals or groups traveling away from home. Tourism encompasses all service providers for visitors or for those related to them" (Ignarra, 2003, p.14).

For the UNWTO (2020) Tourism is a social, cultural and economic phenomenon which entails the movement of people to countries or places outside their usual environment for personal or business / professional purposes. These people are called visitors (which may be either tourists or excursionists; residents or non-residents) and tourism has to do with their activities, some of which involves tourism expenditure. Tourist (or overnight visitor): A visitor (domestic, inbound or outbound) is classified as a tourist (or overnight visitor), if his / her trip includes an overnight stay, or as a same-day visitor (or excursionist) otherwise (IRTS 2008, 2.13). Pinto (2008, p. 1) states that, "Portugal presents itself as a country turned to the Tourism sector due to its natural characteristics, finding itself to invest in this, either through the improvement of the quality of its infrastructures and services, either diversification of tourism products offered. "

For Portugal, in this specific case of Portalegre, being able to adapt its offer to the needs of consumers of tourist products has to take into account the aspects that provide satisfaction and dissatisfaction while experienced by the tourist, ensuring that value and pleasure are evaluated in a way that

expectations are met or exceeded. For Schmitt (2004: 25), experience in the tourism sector provides guidance for creating value, since it allows identifying all aspects that translate into customer satisfaction, ensuring that value and pleasure are assessed in a expectations are met or exceeded.

For Tocquer and Zins (1999: 83), "One of the essential tasks of a marketing manager in a company or in a tourist organization is to understand the way in which the consumer makes a certain number of decisions regarding the choice of a vacation destination".

The same author state that (1999: 181), the product is the central element of tourism marketing and is defined as a set of tangible and intangible elements that cause "benefits" sought by one or more customers. According to Silva, Mendes and Guerreiro (2001: 66), "The tourist product is the link between supply and demand and, as such, constitutes the central figure in the entire process of analysis and evaluation of perceived quality, both by tourists as well as by other players in the process of providing the tourist service"

Tourism sector organizations offer a vast and diverse range of products and services, ranging from accommodation to catering, rent-a-car, entertainment, among others, and which constitute the operational result of the respective production processes. This type of specific products can either be subject to integrated marketing and consumption, usually in the form of packages, or presented in isolation, consolidating the structural bases of the tourism offer in a given region, and should be understood as potential links in the value chain that tourist experiences and evaluates during their stay." (Silva et al., 2001: 66)

The global or composite product results from a perspective of integration, at the regional level, of all the reality offered and experienced by the tourist. This product concept is seen as a synonym for tourist destination (Silva et al., 2001: 66).

According to Cooper et al. (2007:654), "The value of a tourist product includes a number of different aspects, including price perception, quality and image, in addition to economic and social aspects related to the consumer. Today's customers have much more information with which to make comparisons between alternative offers (...) Also, some people have a wide circle of friends and may consult alternative sources of information when deciding which offer provides more value than the others".

For the same author (2007:654), "the perceived value is based on the following:

- The actual price requested and the comparison in relative terms with similar or equal products offered by other companies.

- The perception of quality, service and image that is associated with the brand/product.
- The suitability of the purchase method or channel and its consistency with consumer needs.
- The difficulties of the consumer regarding the ability to evaluate the benefits or the price of the product in comparative terms.
- The experience linked to the purchase or consumer process.”

The tourist value judgment includes aspects intrinsic to the purchase as a previous activity of the trip and to the tourist experience itself. An experiential perspective can incorporate the symbolic, hedonic and aesthetic aspects of the consumption process.

The value can be based on the dimensions of thought and feeling related to the buying and consuming behaviour of the tourist product. Tourism produces a total tourist experience: planning the trip, shopping, traveling, visiting, staying, returning trip and reflecting the tourist about the activity in the tourist region.

Thus, “As tourism is a people-based industry where the performance and interaction capacity of employees are of great importance, we find ourselves in a human environment where mistakes are inevitable. Therefore, it is necessary to assess the benefits of a higher level of use and the fact that consumers “repeat” - reuse a service (s) - against the possible loss of new customers.

The moment of truth or real impact on the bottom line of an organization is, therefore, the assessment that people make regarding the quality of service.” (Cooper et al., 2007: 689)

## 5. Method

This case study is a collection and analysis of indirect data of tourists looking for tourist products from the North Alentejo. The collection of this information is decisive for the definition of the main lines of intervention to be pursued, and for the identification of the actions that can best meet the needs and expectations of demand.

Data from the Survey of Visitors in the municipality of Portalegre are used, carried out by the team of the Portalegre City Hall in order to know in more detail, the characteristics of those who already visit the destination. Secondary data collected by the study developed by the “Observatório do Turismo do Alentejo” are also used.

## 6. Results

In Portalegre, the demand for tourist accommodation, between 2013 and 2017<sup>1</sup>, reached a record value of 35,449 overnight stays in 2017, following a positive growth trend that had been accentuated since 2013. Comparing the number of overnight stays in 2013 and 2017, there is a substantial increase of about 267.9%.

**A. Visitor Profile of Alentejo** - In a total of 1000 individuals, the majority of respondents who visited Alentejo lived in Portugal (70.4%), followed by residents in Spain (13.5%). Analysing the origin of the guests from Alto Alentejo, the main markets of this sub-region, Portugal and Spain, followed by America and France.

The average age of the respondents was between 35 and 54 years old (49.1%), and a large part had a predominantly higher education level (45.0%), had the status of married or lived in a de facto union (71.8%).

The net monthly income of households was between € 1001 and € 2000 (32.3%). With regard to professional occupation, 14.7% of respondents were "self-employed", 12.4% "middle management", 12.2% "specialized workers" and 12% "retired". More than ¾ of the respondents pointed out "Leisure / recreation / holidays" as the main motivation for visiting the region (76.9%), with the attributes most favourably rated "hospitality", "accommodation", "gastronomy", "monuments / museums", "wine experimentation", "natural and scenic heritage", "tranquillity" and "beaches".

With regard to the organization of the trip, a large part of the respondents reported having already visited the Alentejo from previous visits (48.8%) and having used the Internet to mainly book accommodation (66.0%). Reservations were made less than a month in advance (46.0%), with the privileged channel of information about the region coming mainly from the circle of family and friends (41.5%). When traveling to the destination, respondents used mainly their "own car" (71.3%), staying predominantly in the region (66.0%), for 3.5 to 3.9 days. They travelled with companions (77.6%), especially with family / friends or as a couple, and sought mostly registered collective accommodation (66.0%) and, of these, the hotel industry, although the demand for private accommodation is not negligible, especially the homes of family/friends (20.6%).

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<sup>1</sup> INE- Survey on the Stay of Guests in Hotels and other Accommodation; Source: PORDATA; Last update: 2019-03-04



With regard to behaviour during the trip, respondents developed, at the destination, essentially activities around rest / rest (15.3%), cultural visits (13.2%), gastronomic experiences (10.3%), visits natural heritage (7.6%) and frequency of beaches (7.6%). Overall, respondents revealed high levels of satisfaction with the region (50.7% were very or extremely satisfied and 46.8% said they were satisfied), showing a clear tendency to return and advise the destination.

**B. Visitor Profile of Norte Alentejo**<sup>2</sup>. The ages of the visitors vary between 22 and 84 years, with an average age of 51 years approximately, which indicates an approximation to the average age of the visitor from Alentejo, as previously mentioned.

Just over half of the respondents live in Portugal (53.5%). Among foreign countries, Spain stands out (16, 3) with a greater number of visitors, followed by Germany and Holland with (7%). Brazil has a lower representation (4.7%). Of the residents in Portugal, the municipality with the greatest origin is Lisbon, followed by Porto.

The vast majority of visitors come from Vocational Education (38.6%) followed by Graduates (27.3%) and the rest have at least Secondary Education (25%), more than half of visitors exercise a profession (54.5%) and a significant percentage are retired (31.8%).

The households of visitors to the municipality of Portalegre mostly earn a monthly income between € 1001 and € 4000 (83.3%). For the majority of respondents (73%), Portalegre is one among other destinations to visit.

Of the destinations identified by the respondents as other places to visit, Marvão, Castelo de Vide and Évora stand out. This element makes it possible to infer that the development of tourism products in conjunction with the municipalities of Marvão and Castelo de Vide may translate into an effective gain of scale and external visibility, and / or that it is necessary to identify strategies to attract tourist flows that already exist in the region, proximity territorial surroundings.

Almost all respondents classify their visit as 'Leisure / Recreation / Vacation'. Other reasons also mentioned, in addition to those specified in the questionnaire, are "Taste for History and Heritage", "Culture", "Sport" and "Painting / drawing".

As favourite attractions for their visit, respondents have already visited or plan to visit the Tapestry Museum, the Casa Museu José Régio and the Sé. The relevance of the Tapestry Museum and the Casa Museu José Régio, within the

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<sup>2</sup> Data collected from March to June 2019

framework of the activities pointed out by the respondents as preferential visits during your stay in Portalegre, allow you to reinforce the importance of these two resources for the tourism development of the municipality, not only by enhancing the experience of visiting these spaces, but also by reinforcing these icons as identity elements of the territory and that contribute to the competitive positioning of Portalegre. The 'cultural and historical resources' as well as 'landscape and nature' are the attributes most valued by respondents when choosing Portalegre as a tourist destination.

Most respondents travel with 'Spouse/partner', followed by those who travel with family and / or friends. The means of transport most used by the respondents was their own vehicle.

Globally, respondents are 'Very satisfied' or 'Extremely satisfied' with Portalegre as a tourist destination. This is an extremely relevant aspect, especially when considering the specific aspects most valued by visitors.

The aspects most valued by respondents during their visit were 'People', 'Food/gastronomy' and 'Landscape'.

Most visitors intend to return and/or recommend Portalegre as a tourist destination, noting that there are none that do not intend to return. This element is also extremely relevant, especially when considering the current difficulty that tourist destinations feel in retaining their visitors.

To plan their trip, respondents favoured the use of search engines, travel guides and social networks. This is, in fact, a widespread trend in the behaviour of most tourists, and which reinforces the need for an active, strategic and articulated presence, of the various tourist agents (public and private) on digital platforms and social networks.

## 7. Conclusions and Recommendations

This study allows us to verify the importance of knowing the profile of the visitor in the North of the Alentejo in order to adapt the offer of the most appreciated tourist products and promote the degree of satisfaction of this visitor.

Adopting marketing strategies that captivate and attract the consumer is essential to attract regional development, so necessary in this region of Portugal, developing the small regional economy.

It is possible to understand from this study that, globally, respondents are 'Very satisfied' or 'Extremely satisfied' with Norte Alentejo as a tourist destination, and that most visitors intend to return and / or recommend Portalegre as a



tourist destination. This is an extremely relevant aspect, especially when considering the specific aspects most valued by visitors.

It is also clear that, meeting the profile of the visitant, there is a strong need to increase digital media as tools to promote the territory of the Norte Alentejo.

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