

Portuguese urban spaces and perceived risks: A stakeholder perspective approach

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Objectives | The pursuit of leisure linked with tourism activities is also associated with several perceived risks that may occur before or during visitation. The perception of risk in tourism is partly due to the intangible and unpredictable nature of traveling to a place other than one's usual place of residence, which is associated with uncertainty and fear. In the case of urban tourism, many common characteristics of urban circuits can condition the perceived risk, namely the large concentration of people, traffic, a greater propensity for crime, ghettos, homelessness, vandalism and others. These features, which are found in most large urban areas, can increase tourists risk perceptions. However, tourism is an integral part of the urban context and cities are generators of wealth, both economically and socio-culturally. The risk variables, space and consumption, are particularly important in the study of perceived risk, as more trips are being made and tourist centers in cities have become increasingly vital (Cui et al., 2016). In this way, tourist activity largely depends on the safety of tourists, which may affect their consumption behavior and their intention to revisit the destination. In view of these factors, it was considered important to consult the various tourism stakeholders such as tourists, tourism operators, tourism workers and residents. The aim of this work was to understand, whether on the consumer side or on the supply side which risks are most commonly perceived by visitors, in Porto and Lisbon. Finally, respondents indicated measures and policies that they believe could increase the sense of security in the destinations surveyed.

Methodology | This study used a qualitative, exploratory approach using a semi-structured interview guide that could be answered quickly. Different stakeholder groups were interviewed between 2022 and 2023, as the previous period strongly influenced the responses due to the post-pandemic period. The interviews were conducted randomly in the city centers of Porto and Lisbon, as the study focuses on Portuguese cities, and these are the main urban centers of the country. The interviewees were located in tourist facilities, on the street or in tourist accommodation. All interviewees were asked verbally for permission to record the interview in order to facilitate data processing. The names of the participants and the establishments they worked for (e.g., the names of tourist accommodations) were not asked or recorded to ensure anonymity and confidentiality. A

total of 50 exploratory interviews were conducted, which were later transcribed and imported into the NVivo 14 software.

Main Results and Contributions | During the analysis with the Nvivo 14 software, five main categories related to the risks perceived in Portuguese city centers emerged: 1) crime, 2) overcrowding, 3) weather, 4) mobility, 5) homelessness. The categories with the highest number of coded mentions were mobility and crime. Regarding mobility participants talk about the pavement (Portuguese sidewalk), public transportation and scooters. In this category, the potential risks were specified in more detail about Portuguese urban characteristics. Concerning crime, the results were more general, as they could be reproduced in most cities. Participants mainly mention petty crime as potential risks such as robbery and pickpocketing. Also, the participants indicated being approach by drug dealers which for some make them feel uncomfortable. Regarding polices for feeling safer at these destinations participants mention to increase the presence of police in the streets more focus on tourist activities.

Limitations | This work opted for a qualitative and exploratory approach, being limited in its sample for study replication. Furthermore, this type of methodology inherently involves a high level of subjectivity. Furthermore, the interviews to tourists were conducted mainly in English, which may have affected some responses due to linguistic constraints.

Conclusions | Safety is an issue of great importance in tourism, as it is one of the most important attributes that destinations can offer (Seabra et al., 2020). Even though Portugal is considered one of the safest countries in the world, the perception of risk is cross-contextual and varies from destination to destination. In addition, the stakeholders involved in tourism activities in these destinations, whether from the consumer or supplier perspective, have a city base opinion of the perceived risks. These perspectives are on-site and conditioned by active urban elements of Lisbon and Porto. In these Portuguese cities, the results show a greater tendency to perceive the risk of accidents and injuries, often associated with sidewalks, roads, traffic and weather conditions. From the stakeholders' point of view, it would be important to strengthen policing in cities through a tourist-friendly approach. For further research this subject could be used in mixed and quantitative studies to deepen this research topic in terms of possible actions by public authorities to increase the sense of safety for all.

References

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