

Porto as an LGBT+ friendly destination

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Objectives | Tourism has a special value for LGBT+ people. It is an opportunity to alleviate the stress caused by discrimination and sexual prejudice in the regions from which they come. LGBT+ tourists consider several aspects when choosing a holiday destination. The LGBT+ segment is a fast-growing segment with high spending power, loyalty and potential. Portugal has one of the most progressive laws in the world when it comes to homosexuality. However, there is still a large gap between legislation and LGBT+ tourists' perceptions of the LGBT+ friendliness of destinations. According to Jordan (2018), even in more socially liberal countries, LGBT+ people may not identify as such for fear of discrimination and may be unwilling to participate in interviews or surveys. This significantly affects the number and, more importantly, the quality of research. It is very difficult to obtain significant samples from the entire LGBT+ community. In this regard, Jordan (2018) adds that there is a lack of platforms that allow researchers to easily reach LGBT+ people, which makes it difficult for researchers to develop specific relevant studies. Most research on LGBT+ communities emerged in the 1990s and early 2000s, mainly discussing their economic power, but also sexuality, destination choice and LGBT+ leisure space configuration (Monaco, 2022). Early research on gay consumers suggested that a gay travel market did not exist or was not viable. It concluded that sexual orientation should not constitute a market segment (Vorobjovas-Pinta & Hardy, 2016). Other studies have focused on the relationship between homosexuality, consumption, and hospitality (Avena & Rossetti, 2006), gay men's holiday travel consumption (Clift & Forrest, 1999; Hughes, 2002; Hughes & Deutsch, 2010; Pritchard et al., 2000), understanding destination choice behavior (Hoffmann et al., 2018; Neves & Brambatti, 2019) and the benefits of LGBT-inclusive destinations (Ram et al., 2019; Hahn et al., 2021). The overall objective of this study is to understand how LGBT+ visitors perceive Porto as a LGBT+ friendly destination. The study also aims to determine whether gender identity and sexual orientation influence the motivation of LGBT tourists to travel to Porto, whether LGBT tourists are valued by the destination and DMOs, and whether the perceived safety of LGBT tourists influences their intention to recommend and return to the destination.

Methodology | In the present research, we chose to use a mixed methodology, so that the chosen tools to collect data were the questionnaire and the semi-structured interview. A hotel located in the Porto Gay Circuit and an LGBT+ trade and tourism organization were used for the interviews. The questionnaire was given to 246 LGBT+ tourists, both domestic and foreign, first-time, or previous visitors to Porto. The data obtained were analyzed using the IBM Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 29, which allowed the pre-established hypotheses of the research to be tested.

Main Results and Contributions | The results show that LGBT+ tourists' motivations to travel to Porto are only influenced by sexual orientation and not gender identity, that tourists who feel that the LGBT+ segment is valued by the destination's DMOs and tourism sector are tourists who feel safe in Porto, and that tourists who feel better and safer in Porto have higher intentions to recommend and revisit the destination in the future. It was also found that tourists in general do not have a perception of Porto as an LGBT+ friendly destination. However, there is a high level of intention among LGBT+ tourists to revisit the destination and to recommend it.

Limitations | The data collection was limited, especially regarding the interviewing, as not all participants could be interviewed. Regarding the use of questionnaires, the aim was to obtain a greater heterogeneity of participants and to distribute questionnaires to a greater number of participants. This was not possible due to the coincidence of two of the largest LGBT+ events in Porto on the same weekend. The survey could have been written in neutral language to be more inclusive, given the target audience.

Conclusions | This research shows how LGBT+ tourists perceive Porto as an LGBT+ friendly destination. Studies should be developed that, in addition to the perspective of LGBT+ tourists, consider the perspective of LGBT+ businesses in the tourism sector, destination DMOs, LGBT+ social associations, the resident LGBT+ community and the perspective of the non-LGBT+ resident community, to obtain the effective LGBT+ inclusiveness of the destination. In addition, strategy proposals should be studied, developed, and presented in a strategic approach to raise awareness of the DMO, considering the potential of Porto to stand out in the market as an LGBT+ friendly destination and the lack of a tourism strategy aimed at this segment. Few studies exist that analyze how LGBT+ tourists perceive destinations to be LGBT+ friendly. Destinations often describe themselves as LGBT+ friendly. However, LGBT+ tourists' perceptions may not be identical. If destinations want to be perceived as LGBT+ friendly by LGBT+ tourists, there are several aspects of LGBT+ friendliness that they need to ensure. Furthermore, there is a lack of studies analyzing LGBT+ tourism nationally and regionally in the city of Porto. Therefore, there is a

need to explore LGBT+ tourists' perceptions of Porto's LGBT+ friendliness and identify the facilitators and barriers to the growth of this segment in the destination.

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