

# The Delphi Technique Applied to **Urban and Cultural Tourism Research** in the Algarve<sup>1</sup>

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**Abstract** | Urban tourism is a major economic and social activity where the cultural dimension of cities is one of the main factors that attract visitors. The present work results from a dissertation thesis that aimed to evaluate the existence of cultural tourism in the towns of Faro and Silves and proposed means of fostering such activities in the future.

The “transversality” of knowledge linked to tourism and the dynamics it can create make tourism one of the most difficult activities to quantify and evaluate.

The developed investigation can be translated into an integrating approach of the concept of cultural patrimony and urban tourism, domains that so far have stayed apart.

The use of several investigative methods in a complementary way – group interviews, Delphi method and case study (three sided methods) –, have revealed to be a strong point in the applied methodology. On the other hand, as will be shown later, the Delphi technique, although revealing some difficulties of application, and not being a decisive instrument nor being often used in tourism, has been very useful for the treatment of qualitative information.

So we will introduce the main methodologies used on our research and analyse the various methods available for tourism research. Some of the acquired results are also summarized and specified in the case studies, highlighting the potential that the combination of several investigative methods have brought in helping to discover the answer to proposed aims.

**Keywords** | Urban and Cultural Tourism, Strategic Planning, Triangulation of Methods, Qualitative Analysis, Prospective Vision.

**Resumo** | O turismo urbano é hoje uma actividade económica e social principal, e a componente cultural das cidades é um dos factores principais para a atracção de visitantes.

O presente trabalho resulta da investigação desenvolvida no âmbito da dissertação de mestrado que estabeleceu como objectivos principais avaliar a importância do turismo cultural nas cidades de Faro e Silves, numa abordagem pela oferta,

<sup>1</sup> The analysis and the results presented was based on the investigation to obtain the master’s degree in Management of the Cultural Inheritance by the University of the Algarve and University of Paris 8, and are published by the GEPE (Office of Studies and Economical Prospective of the Ministry of Economy). This work discusses the problems of tourism, and proposes new complementary offers (mainly based on cultural products as tourist resources), able to rejuvenate the model of traditional tourism on the basis of “sun and beach”.

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e propor formas de prever o desenvolvimento das actividades associadas a esse tipo de turismo para o futuro.

A “transversalidade” do conhecimento ligado ao turismo, e as dinâmicas que pode criar, tornam o turismo, uma das actividades mais difíceis de quantificar e avaliar.

A investigação desenvolvida pode ser traduzida numa abordagem integradora do conceito de património cultural e de turismo urbano, domínios que até recentemente têm permanecido separados.

A utilização de vários métodos de investigação de forma complementar – entrevistas de grupo, método Delphi e estudo de caso – revelou-se um ponto forte da metodologia adoptada. Por outro lado, como será demonstrado, a técnica Delphi, ainda que tenha revelado algumas dificuldades na sua aplicação, e não se constituindo como um instrumento de decisão principal, nem tendo sido com frequência utilizado no turismo, demonstrou-se muito adequado para o tratamento de informação qualitativa.

Assim, apresentam-se as principais técnicas de investigação utilizadas na nossa pesquisa e analisam-se os vários métodos disponíveis à investigação em turismo. Alguns dos resultados adquiridos serão também sumariados nos estudos de caso, demonstrando o potencial que a utilização conjunta de vários métodos de pesquisa trouxe para a resposta aos objectivos propostos.

**Palavras-chave** | Turismo Urbano e Cultural, Planeamento Estratégico, Triangulação de Métodos, Análise Qualitativa, Visão Prospectiva.

## 1. Introduction

Urban tourism is a major economic and social activity and the cultural dimension of cities is one of the main factors that attract visitors. Nevertheless, urban tourism is rarely included within the scope of local planning activities. The present work results from a dissertation thesis that aimed to evaluate the existence of cultural tourism in the towns of Faro and Silves, and the proposed means for fostering such activities in the future.

It also aimed to address the role of cities in diversifying and complementing the principal tourism product in the Algarve – “sun and beach”.

Through an offer approach, opportunities, threats and strategies for the development of the cultural patrimony as a tourist product complementary to “sun and beach” in the Algarve are discussed, in a prospective view heading towards 2015 as the final year.

The transversality of knowledge linked to tourism and the dynamics it can create, make tourism one of the most difficult activities to quantify and

evaluate. The positioning of this area of knowledge as an economic, social and human science has been largely debated, and it has even generated real fights among different scientific areas.

The developed investigation can be translated into an integrating approach of the concept of cultural patrimony and urban tourism, domains that so far have stayed apart.

Our problem is, thus, framed in an investigation area that shows some lack of theoretical sustainability and previous research.

The use of several investigative methods in a complementary way – group interviews, Delphi method and case study (three sided methods) –, have revealed to be a strong point of the applied methodology. On the other hand, as will be shown later, the Delphi technique, although revealing some difficulties of application, and not being a decisive instrument nor being often used in tourism, has shown to be very useful in the treatment of qualitative information.

So we will introduce the main methodologies used on our research and analyse the various

methods available for tourism research. Some of the acquired results are also summarized and specified in the case studies, with emphasis on the potential that the combination of several investigation methods has brought to finding out the answer to the proposed aims.

## 2. Development

If we analyse the offer of products of cultural tourism we verify that the number of these available products has been growing very fast in recent years (Richards, 1994; Swarbrooke, 1994). This is fundamentally due to the opening of many attractions in the last decades (where the thematic parks are included) and due to the fact that the "tourist industry" organised more programs with cultural products.

Regarding this fact we have to add that for a large number of attractions, the cultural inheritance is its "blush product", as there are many destinations that were developed on the basis of their historical and cultural appeal.

The cultural-tourist products emerged as privileged partners in the relation between destination and its need for diversification, because it meets the need of diversifying offer, but also meets the need for cultural identity of communities. Nowadays, it faces the growing movement of globalization and the transformation of productive processes (Gonçalves, 2003).

The tourism applied research has been devoted to the possible development of new offers trying to respond to the changes and the characteristics of post-modern society, but also the innovation of the image of the traditional destinations.

The cultural heritage is one of the major attractions of cities and a basic element in the structure of the modern city. With time, cultural tourism, while an instrument of local development, appears associated to advantages that go from the market growth reputation, through the positive

role in the construction of the destination image, and the promotion of the nature of a specific-place (consolidation of the culture and identity of the place).

Tourist destinations use the images of inheritance more and more as a form of affirming their identity, at the same time as we witness the increase in the search for this type of product.

Underlying this work is an attempt to evaluate the development of cultural tourism product in the cities of Faro and Silves, and its forms of future development, putting the role of the cities in perspective in the development of strategies of diversification and complementarity, regarding the main product of tourism in the Algarve – "sun and beach".

In our technologically advanced and consumerist society one of the principal threats that fall back on the inheritance is the sense of loss in its usage. Nevertheless, this happens when due to several circumstances we turn the inheritance into just one more object of consumption.

The recognition of the importance of the cultural sustainability was already apprehended by the cultural tourism, when it considered that the future of the tourist industry depends on the protection of the environmental, patrimonial and cultural resources of each region.

However, the discussion of the cultural heritage associated to tourism unearths a field little explored with respect to applied studies and product development (Ritchie, 1993; Creswell, 1994; Krueger, 1994; Dencker, 1998):

- Emerging difficulties as a result of the "inter-disciplinarity";
- Absence of definite and absolute knowledge of the phenomenon being studied;
- Lack of articulation and knowledge between "tourist industry" and the sector of culture and inheritance;
- Investigation devoted to tourism has not been favouring the compared studies.

Presently we are watching a growing interest in the articulation between these two powers, but a clear difficulty happens when trying to put into practice what was already declared in the political and institutional speech.

This and other questions were an object of analysis in our theory of Master's degree, and they substantiate the results that will show up in the course of this work.

### 3. Theoretical framework

#### 3.1. The new challenges of tourism and the emergence of cultural tourism

Nowadays, society faces new challenges, with emphasis given to the most relevant (Hernández and Tresseras, 2001) such as: the globalisation of the political, economical and cultural relations; the acceleration of regionalisation and administrative decentralisation processes that favour the reunion or the rediscovery of the territory; the ascent of social democracy that demands deeper public intervention in culture; the extension of education and igniting processes of pedagogical renovation; and the extension of the culture of leisure and free time that accelerated the growth of "mass" tourism and favoured cultural consumption.

These social changes were also responsible for the deep change in the parameters of traditional tourism and the consolidation of a new model (Mundet *et al.*, 1997:79), which was designated by "post-fordism". The most relevant characteristics of the "post-fordism" tourism were already recognized in some studies (Fortuna, 1995; Mundet *et al.*, 1997; Poon, 1993; Urry, 1990): abolishing frontiers with regards to other activities (culture, sport, and entertainment, work); overcoming geographical concentration; changes in forms of business organization; the crisis of "massification" and the disappearance of the concept of authenticity.

Within this context, cultural tourism was established as an attractive area of development (Bianchini and Parkinson, 1993; Richards, 1993), since it represents a form of attraction of internal and external investment. It also stimulates the investment in image improvement of the city or region, besides "injecting" receipts through tourist expense to which it gives rise (Myerscough, 1988).

Cultural tourism is still seen as an important form of rewarding the cost of building new infrastructures and cultural equipments (reductions in public expenditures during the 80's made it still more attractive) (Walle, 1998).

#### 3.2. The relation between tourism and management of the cultural inheritance

The relation between tourism and management of cultural inheritance has been typified as a competition by the use of the same resource instead of being characterized as a cooperation to reach objectives of mutual benefits, and excessive attention has been given to the maintenance of the values of conservation on behalf of tourism.

Goeldner and Ritchie (1995: 263), for example, argue that a process of "homogeneity" of tourist products is taking place at a world-wide level, because a great similarity is happening between what each destiny offers to a tourist. That is why they point out the need to encourage cultural diversity.

On the other hand, McKercher and du Cros (2002) talk about the importance of planning tourism based on cultural inheritance, and of cultural management, proposing the identification of those resources that are really exceptional and of great value to the destination.

Like all contemporary cultural phenomena, tourism is also a complex one (Cohen, 1988; Krippendorf, 1987; Mathieson and Wall, 1982). Cooperation between the various actors seems to be the key to success for a sustainable development (Figure 1).

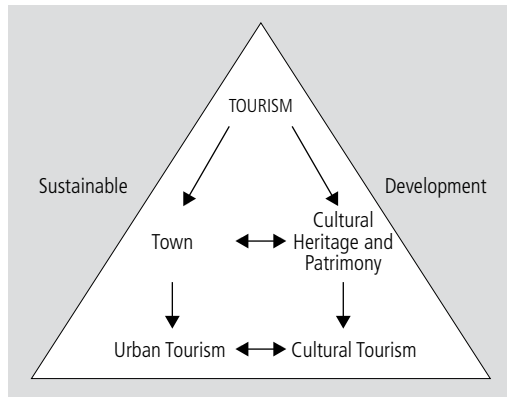


Figure 1 | Conceptual framework.

In what concerns the economical positive potential of tourism for the city, the next main factors stand out (Ashworth and Tunbridge, 1990: 260): cultural tourism capitalizes the already existing resources in the historical city; the use of infrastructures for tourism and services of the city will bring only marginal costs to the existing equipments; if compared with the necessary effort in other sectors and in areas where there are few alternatives, it applies for a low investment for the creation of jobs. The economical benefits generated by tourism activities represent more financial resources for the conservation of the built environment (*ibid.*: 262), but a formula that optimizes the relation losses/benefits will have to be found for each place and will certainly have its basis on a larger cooperation between the different agents, and in the participation of the local community.

Davidson (1992: 3) has no doubts about the growing trends of the demand on cultural heritage resources as touristic products. "Cultural tourism (...) is the motivation behind the vast majority of visits to Europe from the less ancient continents of the 'New World', and also, plays a major part in the growing trend towards taking short breaks and second holidays".

In terms of demand, tourism is based on a process of consumption of experiences, sale of dreams able to satisfy the needs of the consumer

– the tourist. The so called "new tourism" values the experience more, in an attempt to give meaning to an ephemeral one (Hernández and Tresseras, 2001).

Based on the proposed aims for this work, we identified the next theoretical presuppositions as essential for the development of tourist products associated to culture and inheritance in the Algarve:

- the emergence of a new model of tourism and the decadence of the traditional model (Cuvelier *et al.*, 1994; Poon, 1993; Prentice, 1993 and 1994);
- the "new tourist" and the evolution tendencies of the cultural tourism (Barré, 1995; Cuvelier *et al.*, 1994; Davidson, 1992; Hewison, 1987; Prentice, 1993 and 1994; Richards, 1996; among others);
- the cultural component in urban tourism as a strategy of local development (urban regeneration and relaunch of the tourist destination) (Ashworth and Tunbridge, 1990; Caffyn and Lutz, 1999; Fainstein and Judd, 1999; Källtorp *et al.*, 1997; among others);
- and, the practices of management and planning of the cultural inheritance as a tourist resource (Ashworth and Dietvorst, 1995; Boniface, 1995; Boullon, 1996; European Commission, 1999; Costa, 2001; Dredge, 1998; Gunn, 1994; OWHC, 2000; Patin, 1998 and 1999; Pearce, 1989; Prentice, 1993b; Van der Borg, 1998).

We can characterize the relation between culture, tourism and local administration as summarised above (Table 1).

Tourism sees resources in the perspective of the user and values them for their intrinsic and extrinsic appeal to consumption. Tourism has, in general, the tendency to maximize the number of visits to the resource whereas museums, for example, are more preoccupied in the well-being of the resource and even limit access to it.

**Table 1** | Relationship between culture, tourism and local administration

Agents	Present situation
Tourist industry	Attentive to the variations of the search and creators of new products.
Cultural agents/heritage managers	Perceive tourism as an additional fountain of receipts/income in periods of retraction of the public support.
Local authorities	Try to support the physical and functional renovation of specific areas based on new sectors of the local economy, among which leisure activities and tourism.

It has been widely discussed that tourism and associated activities are responsible for quick and significant alterations in economical, social and cultural terms, as well as, at times, the origin of radical transformations in the natural and built environment.

The process of "transformation" of cultural and patrimonial resources in tourism must be based on a planning of the tourist development that secures the practice of a sustainable tourism. This means (AHC, 2004; Cabrini, 2002) we should favour the balanced development of the territory, improve the life conditions of local communities, favour the permanence of the population in the rural areas. We should also increase the value of traditional products, promote local cultural initiatives, and establish a flow of relations among the countryside, the people and the city. It will be a basic need, and a priority, the creation of social and economic benefits for the local community with the money coming in from tourism.

#### 4. Research aims and objectives

Taking into account those concerns and the already developed investigation as a working base, we established as our main objectives the answer to the proposed subject:

- To consider the difficulties of an investigation devoted to tourism;
- To present and to discuss concrete proposals
  - the triangulation of methods;

- To identify the main challenges that emerged from the investigation of the urban and cultural tourism domains.

Research problem:

*Can or can not the cultural component of the Urban Tourism be constituted in the Algarve as a complement of the offer to main product "sun and beach", in the cases of Faro and Silves?*

In view of the formulated questions and the characteristics of the investigation, it was determined that the inquiry to be developed would be of the exploratory type, in order to allow for a deeper intimacy with the phenomenon.

#### 5. Methodological framework

The presented investigation adopted as its base a triangulation of methods (Table 2), i.e. a combination of several methods of investigation (group interview; Delphi method and case study). The qualitative methods were also determined as more appropriate because they allow a more deepened and complementary study of the social phenomena (from a revision of literature on techniques and methods of investigation in social sciences, among which: Easton, 1982; Veal, 1997; Dencker, 1998).

The qualitative approaches are necessary to try to realize the nature and the effects of meanings and the understanding of recent phenomena. At the time, the qualitative data was much more appreciated by decision-makers because the results are presented in an objective and understandable way (Krueger, 1994:29; in Gonçalves, 2003).

**Table 2 | Importance of the research methods to the final results**

Methods	Summary
Case study (Easton, 1982; Creswell, 1994; Dencker, 1998)	To realize the present situation and to do the diagnosis of the problem of investigation. To study and gather detailed information of connected cases with the phenomenon to be studied. Allow combination with other investigation techniques.
Group interview (Krueger, 1994; Peterson, 1994; Arksey e Knight, 1999)	To promote joint confrontation between the cultural and patrimonial sector, and the "tourist industry". To deepen cultural inheritance and relative data to the current situation of the product in the Algarve. To consolidate problems questioned by the Delphi method.
Delphi (Leng <i>et al.</i> , 1989; Green <i>et al.</i> , 1990; Creswell, 1994; Petersson, 1994; Dencker, 1998)	To make known the market of cultural tourism in the Algarve and its potential for development. To create interest in realizing attitudes and behaviours in view of the future evolution of the "cultural inheritance". To allow the recognition of convergences and divergences in view of the strategic inter-sectarian measures. To allow for the development of future sceneries and the gathering of information that contributes to the introduction of strategic improvements by using a fundamentally prospective method.

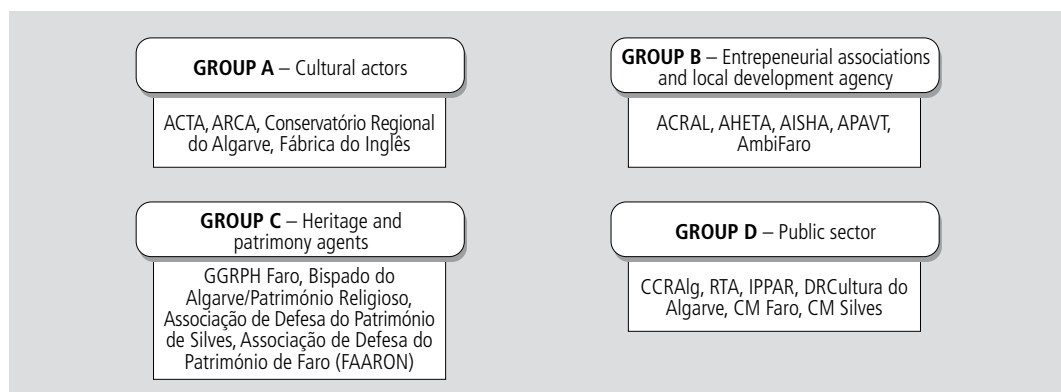
The empirical analysis fell back on the case study of Faro and Silves (in view of the proximity of the object of study; to the already existing investigation; and to the recognized affirmation of the Algarve in the tourist international market while "sun and sea" destination).

It was established as fundamental the development of a diagnosis of the current situation, as well as, the knowledge of the level of development of the cultural inheritance as tourist resources, and of the way the agents responsible for the offer expect them to be in the future (at both cities).

The selection of specialists who participated in the Delphi method (Figure 2) was based on several criteria (Leng *et al.*, 1989; Mitchell and McGoldrick, 1994), having the most relevant names resulted from field work. So it was determined as being

more important: the professional experience of the members of the panel regarding the object of study; and it was asked of the members initially proposed for the panel (in exploratory not structured interviews), to suggest names of other persons whose participation they considered important for the panel. It seemed a determining factor in their choice the theoretical preparation connected with the object of study and the experience acquired in the area (Dencker, 1998).

Regarding the Delphi method, and because it was the main resource of primary information, its period of application was between 22<sup>nd</sup> February and 30<sup>th</sup> June of 2001, being the investigation distributed in three different inquiries to the same agents at different moments.



**Figure 2 | Participants selection.**

That technique fulfilled an important role in the identification of future developments for the “new” tourist products (Leng *et al.*, 1989; Green, 1990), as it allowed to anticipate future events and it could serve as the main basis to formulate and to direct the current strategies of management, and to determine the tactics that could affect the future. Main difficulties arose from the maintenance of specialists’ answers and their motivation to participate in the solicited terms (Gonçalves, 2003).

## 6. Summary of the research results and proposals for the future – Silves e Faro

The offer of complementary and/or alternative products (in particular of the cultural inheritance) is perceived as necessary and strategic for part of the agents of tourism, culture and heritage of the Algarve region (Gonçalves, 2003). The results of the investigation demonstrate it. However, as previously said, to pass from speech to practice, is not always very easy.

In an attempt to systematize the obtained results we can say:

- There are positive expectations in what concerns the marketing of the cultural heritage product.
  - Some initiatives of rehabilitation of the cultural inheritance, having insight of the revitalization of the cultural local identity are planned in both cities.
  - There is a reduced involvement by the local community in cultural projects.
  - There is no articulation among tourism, cultural and heritage sectors.
  - A lack of cultural itineraries occurs.
  - The same tourist profile is drawn for the common tourist in the Algarve and for the one visiting the cultural and patrimonial resources.
  - Great negative impacts resulting from the use of the cultural inheritance as a tourist resource were not identified.
  - The appropriate management of resources is recognised as a preventive of its incident.
  - The necessity of co-ordination among the entities with responsibilities in these areas is noted and the need for a larger mobilization of the business initiative is recognized.
- In terms of proposals and recommendations for the marketing and promotion of the cultural inheritance while a tourist product and as a main complement to the “sun and beach” in the Algarve, the following were pointed out:
- Adoption of “new positioning” politics of the tourist product, through the establishment of strategies that lead to a larger differentiation and competitiveness.
  - Constitution of an office/point of contact among cultural agents, associations and holders of information about European financing programs.
  - Promotion of the development of market researches and distribution of results by the different agents.
  - A greater professionalism and management notion should be provided to the cultural and patrimonial business sector (training actions).
  - Development of cultural planning aimed at the tourist.
  - Promotion of involvement by the community.
  - Constitution of a “net” for marketing the cultural inheritance (e.g. partnership that jointly promotes and develops cultural attractions).
  - Determination of forms of control and evaluation of initiatives carried out (to make known the impact of real actions and facilitate the proposals of new measures).



- To spread the “word-of-mouth”, since decision-making by tourists is often influenced by relatives and friends.
- Support greater investments in regional and national promotion for the foreign market.
- Creation of a forum/committee of discussion and advice in these areas.

These concrete actions proposed in 2001 have not found great development up to the present date.

## 7. Conclusion

A bigger competition between cities and regions to attract incoming tourist receipts and investment led to a particular emphasis in the differentiation of the product, where culture and inheritance appear as determinant elements. Most of the offer was established around the traditional forms of cultural inheritance – museums and art galleries – and it is necessary to recognize that culture includes a great variety of activities.

Equally, we can not forget that the cultural inheritance can constitute an essential component of diversification of the tourist offer, and target the re-launching of the destination (in case of the Algarve, for the qualification and complementarity of the principal product). On the other hand, tourism can contribute in a very positive way to the requalification and revitalization of the urban centres (attraction of new investments, improvement of the quality of life of the local population, urban renovation).

There are mutual interests between tourism and cultural heritage in the management, conservation and presentation of the cultural and patrimonial product, nevertheless both sectors still operate in parallel plans, maintaining a partnership with little dialogue (Benediktsson, 2004).

An analysis of the resulting implications of the advanced scenarios, allows for the introduction of improvements, so that the Algarve renews its competitiveness as is the case of the cities studied, so that they affirm themselves as a tourist complementary offer.

Besides the already above-mentioned factors, we are certain that the development of the cultural inheritance as a tourist product will be able to have a very positive contribution with regards to better spatial distribution of the tourist offer in the Algarve (characterized by a great concentration especially in the coast), and also in a better seasonal distribution of the demand (a major contribution for greater attractiveness of the region in periods of less tourist demand).

The developed study does not allow for the generalization of results, but some questions can be common to other places in a similar phase of development. We checked, however, that there is a much reduced knowledge of our cities and of statistical information referring to tourism.

We hope this investigation has given a main contribution to the union of culture, cultural heritage and tourism agents, and also to demonstrate the need for strategic work between the public and private sectors, for a better use of the cultural heritage as a tourist resource.

Some opportunities of investigation remain for the future in different domains: on the image and perception of the tourist product, to determine strategies for the “repositioning” of the tourist product of the Algarve; regarding a deeper knowledge of the motivations and consumption of cultural-tourist products (expectations versus experience); analysis and comparison of demographic-partner profiles of the tourists, what they visit and what they absorbed of the cultural heritage offered by the Algarve; and, the study and analysis of the marketing techniques and visitors management, in a way that it is able to develop the attractiveness of the cultural heritage as a tourist product in the Algarve.

According to one of the participants in the investigation: "The tourist of the future in the Algarve will be the one we want. It all depends on the offer that will be created". However, it is not enough to have a product – it is necessary to be able "to wrap it up", promote it and market it.

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