

Could Viana do Castelo, a coastal city in Northern Portugal, design cultural tourism more creatively?

Poderá Viana do Castelo, uma cidade costeira no Norte de Portugal, apresentar a sua **oferta turística** de cariz **cultural** de forma **mais criativa**?

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Objectives | Viana do Castelo, in the North of Portugal, is a cultural seaside city making an effort to develop tourism in order to diversify its local economy. It is often argued that carefully planned tourism could provide the additional income as the result of tourism supply diversification. Potential opportunities are usually dependent on a destination's capacity to offer iconic year round attraction(s), consistency in the organization of events throughout the year and be creative with its natural and cultural resources. To attract more tourists, culture needs to be the driver for enhancing creativity, particularly by maximizing spaces as well as a mix of tangible and intangible heritage to meet the lifestyle needs of tourists. There is increasingly a need for destinations to provide new ways for complementing the tourist experience. The aim of this paper is to conduct an exploratory analysis based on the specific context of this coastal city to identify ideas which could be applied to design a more competitive cultural tourism destination, in line with the changing patterns of consumption by more discerning culturally motivated tourists.

Methodology | This work seeks to answer two specific questions: (i) is Viana do Castelo is delivering memorable experiences for visitors?; and (ii) what needs to happen in order to design cultural tourism more creatively, in line with current trends and the constant changes taking place in the marketplace? To answer these two questions research was carried out based essentially on two survey questionnaires

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in the form of face-to-face structured interviews to visitors.

The first survey was carried out between April and June of 2012. A total of 205 usable questionnaires were collected using a convenience sample of visitors. The objective was to clarify visitor demographics, motivation and cultural heritage consumption patterns. Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) program version 18.0 was used for the questionnaire data analysis.

The second survey was carried out in August of 2014 to evaluate the impact an iconic cultural/religious festival had on local tourism. A total of 490 usable questionnaires were collected using a randomly selected sample of residents and visitors alike, which resulted in a sample of 159 residents and 331 visitors. A database was established using Keynote which allows the scan of completed forms.

While the data analyses was restricted to the survey questionnaires, other data collection techniques were also used, more specifically, observation. This approach formed a triangulation of research techniques within a social context and in direct contact with visitors. This method allowed a more in-depth understanding of the visitors' behaviour and what they seek and expect from a cultural tourism destination.

Main Results and Contributions | Research findings show that the respondents visited for holiday purposes seeking local culture and heritage which is reflected in the types of activities undertaken, namely cultural itineraries, fairs/popular festivals and exhibitions (more seeing and less doing).

Results also suggest that Viana do Castelo needs to improve the delivery of memorable experiences for visitors. Some insights have highlighted the importance of different factors that could constrain the development of creative experiences. Higher emphasis needs to be placed on creating customized tourism services. Revitalizing tourism entails going beyond the basic tourism product and bringing a creative dimension — innovating existing products and creating new ones. Thus, the town would most likely need to diversify its attractions portfolio with a complementary of multiple sites to retain tourists longer. Tourism planners need to explore the creative process of designing new products, attractions and activities. Tourists seek to learn, experience and exchange emotions and cultural differences. But they want to do so in an undemanding and entertaining way depending on the level of involvement that they want to attach to it.

Creativity can contribute to reinventing tourism at traditional cultural tourism destinations such as Viana do Castelo. Although cultural artefacts may be easy to copy and transport, the essential link between local know-how, cultural landscapes, cultural identity and place is much harder to copy. Thus, the spread and combination of new ideas is what drives behavior change and innovation (Pentland, 2015).

The first major practical contribution of the present research is that it provides much needed empirical data at a region with a general lack of market intelligence for stakeholders. Access to such information could allow cities such as Viana do Castelo to redesign its cultural and tourism planning accordingly.

Limitations | The study does not take into consideration online reviews and feedback by visitors.

Conclusions | It is imperative to emphasize the fact that tourism destinations where cultural heritage/events take place should be increasingly aware of the challenge they are facing or will possibly face in the near future, with the continuously changing patterns of tourism preferences and expectations. Such changes give rise to a new set of opportunities, namely, in what concerns innovation and creativity to increase positive impacts that could lead to improved benefits to local economies. However, as confirmed by the data, those challenges and opportunities can only be faced and optimized through

ongoing and regular research.

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