

The relationship between destination's attributes, tourist satisfaction and destination loyalty in a cultural destination

A relação entre os **atributos dos destinos**, a **satisfação** dos turistas e a **lealdade** num destino cultural

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Objectives | Many tourists who visit heritage sites seek a value-added and authentic experience, when compared with the traditional products or mass destinations. Considering the importance of tourists' satisfaction in regards to their intentions of revisiting the destination and word-of-mouth referrals, this study attempts to investigate the relationship between the destination's cultural/heritage attributes, tourists' satisfaction and destination loyalty. By addressing these issues, this paper aims to contribute to enhancing the knowledge on the correlation between tourists' perceived characteristics of a certain place and the level of satisfaction they received from visiting it, as well as the cognitive-affective processes behind deciding whether to repeat the visit or not. Using the city of Guimarães (Portugal) as case study, we will try getting confirmation or information of the results related to tourists' satisfaction towards a destination produced by previous empirical research.

Methodology | The research methodology consists of a quantitative approach based on a self-administered survey applied to 432 tourists who visited Guimarães during 2015 and 2016. The questionnaire was elaborated by the tourism services of the municipality in collaboration with the present research team. The questionnaire applied included a total of 22 questions, most of them being categorized and closed. Both, Portuguese and English, versions were available for visitors in the tourist office that exists in the city of Guimarães to fill in. The survey includes three main parts: one relating to the visit to the destination and

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the motivation behind it; a second part where the tourists are invited to express their opinion towards the city's attributes and the level of satisfaction they got from the visit, and, additionally, they are invited to share their intention of returning or of recommending the visit to family and friends (the identification of having chosen the destination as a main option of their tour is also previously inquired in this section); the third part inquires the visitors about their socio-demographic features (gender, age, level of education, residence, marital status and income level). Besides, using descriptive statistics, chi-square and t tests are used in the analysis to check the statistical significance of the results achieved.

Main Results and Contributions | The empirical research revealed that visitors of Guimarães include similar percentages of both genders, mostly aged between 26 and 65 years old (88%), with a high education level (60%) and married (67%). First time tourists hold a higher education level than repeating visitors (63.7% vs 45.3%). Portuguese visitors tend to return more often than foreigners (59.4% vs 11.9%).

Looking at the motivations behind tourists' choice of the destination, and taking into account the whole sample, the choice of Guimarães has proven to be, firstly, due to being a World Heritage Site. Being part of a tour around the region's cities comes in second and thirdly the city's Architectural Heritage. Closely behind the third reason comes Gastronomy and Wines. Having hosted the 2012 European Capital of Culture, together with the idea of taking advantage of the Cultural Activities supplied, are the next motivations. Given this, one can say that visitors are mostly driven by cultural motivations.

In relation to satisfaction, according to their responses to the survey, both first time and repeat visitors declared a high level of overall satisfaction towards visiting the destination (92.8% vs 97.7%). Meanwhile, looking at their intention to return, the main conclusion is that the quality of the product or service supplied does have a direct influence on satisfaction and in the intention to repeat the visit but is not enough to explain (that is, to guarantee) it, a result which is in line with what has been found by the empirical literature on the issue.

With this research we have tried to get a close look to the attributes of the city that were more valued by visitors, their overall satisfaction and intention to return, providing tourism authorities with information that can be used to adjust the tourist planning and promotion of the city.

Limitations | The effectiveness of the sample may be questioned given that the amount of foreign visitors is greater than initially expected, comparing to previous data on the destination's visitors. This biased sample is a consequence of having opted for the implementation of the survey at the Guimarães tourist offices, where Portuguese visitors go less than foreign ones. As such, this is a major limitation of the research undertaken that should be surpassed in future. Nevertheless, this was the only chance to undergo a more extensive survey, one that would not have been possible if the tourists had been approached in the facilities they were visiting or even on the streets.

Conclusions | Correlating the results found and the derived policy recommendations, we believe that the destination may be suffering from not having a consolidated image in the tourism market and of not being able to adequately advertise the products and services it has to offer the visitors. However, given the circumstances, it is plausible to state that the city is performing well. The advertising factor has to do not only with budget constraints but also with options made at the national level, where greater emphasis has been put on the promotion of other products, services and destinations. That promotion

strategy succeeded increasing a lot in the last years the amount of tourists attracted to other cities of north of Portugal, Porto, namely (53 km from Guimarães), which is being known as a city-break destination. However, it is time to convince tourists to stay longer in the Portuguese northern territory and to visit Guimarães. Perhaps, its gastronomy and wines may help in such a strategy, given that the attribute is getting increasing importance among the reasons to choose the city, as revealed by data collected. If so, new promoting strategies should be developed and used abroad.

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