

U. PORTO



**A STUDY OF EXCHANGE STUDENTS' EXPECTATIONS  
AND SATISFACTION ABOUT PORTO AND FEP**

**ANA CLÁUDIA PEREIRA DA SILVA RODRIGUES**

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Supervisor / Orientadora: **Professora Doutora Maria Catarina Roseira**

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School of Economics and Management, University of Porto  
Rua Dr. Roberto Frias | 4200-464 Porto | Portugal  
Telephone: +351 225 571 100, +351 220 426 000 | [www.fep.up.pt](http://www.fep.up.pt)

## **Biographical Note**

Ana Cláudia Rodrigues was born in Porto in 1976. Ana initiated her career in 1994 working in commercial and sales, time-sharing and doing promotions in supermarkets.

She concluded her graduation in Languages in ISCAP in 1997 and later in Assessor of Administration in 2001 in ISAG. Thereafter, she worked as direction assistant for some years, being also manager of an events company. From 2000 to 2014 she worked in a Portuguese big company, beginning as a direction assistant; being assigned the function of controller a few years later, in this company, she did the analysis control of the month, deviations of budget and also reports and presentations.

In 2010, Ana concluded her MBA in Tourism in Instituto de Turismo do Porto.

She is part of the leadership team of a volunteer work and member of the coordinating team of a social project.

In 2011, and pursuing her studies, she began the Master in Marketing of Faculdade de Economia da Universidade do Porto where she developed this thesis.

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“Rejoice in hope, be patient in tribulation, be constant in prayer” Romans 12:12

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## Resumo

Nos últimos anos o número de estudantes Exchange na cidade do Porto e na Universidade do Porto tem demonstrado um aumento significativo.

No entanto, a informação sobre estes alunos é ainda limitada e escassa. É, portanto, necessário e importante obter um maior conhecimento acerca das expectativas dos estudantes Exchange e também do cumprimento dessas expectativas em relação à sua experiência global na cidade do Porto e também na faculdade, razão deste estudo.

Este trabalho pretende explorar a vida escolar e diária dos estudantes Exchange, começando por entender as suas expectativas e experiência na cidade e neste caso, na Faculdade de Economia do Porto (FEP), seguida da sua satisfação e recomendação a outros.

Este estudo adota uma metodologia de pesquisa exploratória qualitativa, utilizando quatro *focus groups*, com um total de 27 estudantes oriundos de diferentes países e a frequentar diferentes cursos na FEP.

Os resultados deste trabalho introduzem questões importantes e úteis para reflexão e abrem caminho para uma futura investigação, contribuindo para o aumento de conhecimento dos estudantes Exchange na cidade do Porto e na FEP; mostram que em relação à cidade do Porto, os estudantes Exchange estão satisfeitos com a hospitalidade do povo português, com a vida na cidade e com as atividades do dia-a-dia e, facilmente, recomendam a cidade a outros.

Relativamente à FEP, os estudantes Exchange estão satisfeitos com os serviços, mas consideram os cursos muito exigentes e os colegas portugueses pouco simpáticos ou prestáveis. A maior parte dos estudantes Exchange recomenda a FEP enquanto alguns estudantes tem mais dificuldade em recomendar a FEP a outros, apenas o farão após

descreverem como é estudar na FEP e apenas se considerarem que as outras pessoas gostam de estudar e são trabalhadoras.

**Palavras-Chave:** Expectativas, Motivações, Experiência, Satisfação, estudantes Exchange, Erasmus Cidade do Porto, FEP

## Abstract

In the last years the number of Exchange students has shown a significant increase both in the city of Porto and at the University of Porto (U.Porto).

However the information about these students is still limited or almost inexistent. That is why, knowledge about the Exchange students' expectations also on the fulfillment of those expectations regarding their overall experience in the city of Porto and in the faculty, is needed and important and leads to this study.

Essentially, this work pretends to explore the Exchange students' student and everyday life, beginning by understanding their expectations and experience in the city and in this case, at the Faculty of Economics of University of Porto (FEP), followed by their overall satisfaction and recommendation to others.

The study adopts an exploratory qualitative research methodology, using four focus groups that integrated 27 students from different countries and enrolled in different programs at FEP.

The results of the work introduce important and useful issues for reflection and open doors to future investigation, contributing to help increase some knowledge of Exchange students in the city of Porto and in FEP. Results show that in relation to the city of Porto, Exchange students feel satisfied with the hospitality of Portuguese people, with the life in the city and day to day activities and easily recommend the city to others.

In what concerns FEP, Exchange students are satisfied with the services, but consider the programs very demanding and Portuguese colleagues not so kind or helpful. Most of Exchange students recommend FEP but some of them have more difficult to recommend FEP to others; they will recommend only after giving a real description of how it is to study in FEP and also if people really like to study and are hard workers.





**Keywords:** Expectations, Motivations, Experience, Satisfaction, Exchange and International students, Erasmus, City of Porto, FEP

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## CHAPTER 1 – INTRODUCTION

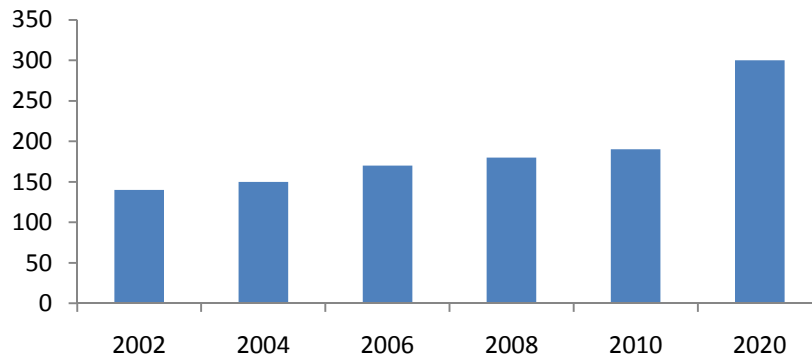
This chapter briefly presents the context of this study, as well as its goals, relevance and structure.

### 1.1 Context

Youth travel is growing very quickly and is one of the most dynamic markets of the global tourism sector (IPDT, 2011a). The World Travel Trends Report (IPK International, 2013) states that around 45% of young people now travel on holidays, and around 38% travel for study and to learn a language. In 2012, young travelers represented 20% of the total global travel market (Chapman & Vetrak, 2013).

According to the World Tourism Organization Network (UNWTO) (2011) forecasts, the number of international tourist arrivals is growing and the global youth travel industry is now estimated to represent almost 190 million international trips a year. By 2020 there will be almost 300 million international youth trips per year, as shown in Figure 1.

**Figure 1 - Million international youth trips**



Source: adapted from (UNWTO & Wyse Travel Confederation, 2011)

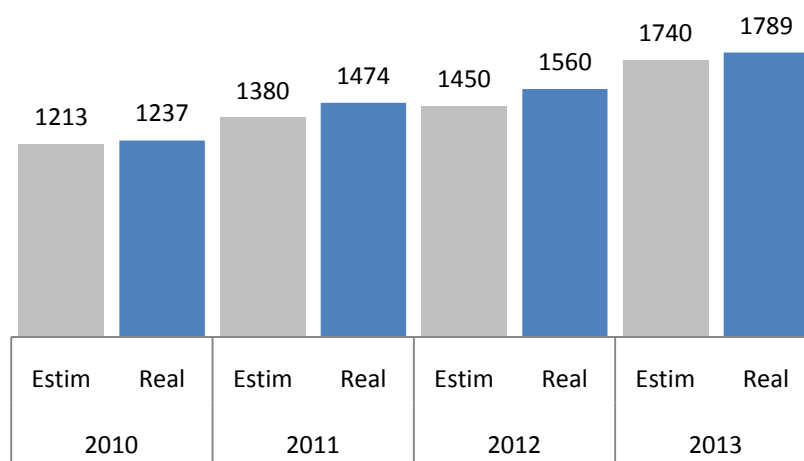
Within the youth segment, because of the growing importance of exchange programs and student travel one can expect a growth in student and youth tourism (Wilson & Richards, 2003). In the beginning of the century, large profits were generated by the student travel market and constituted a large market section inside system of travel. Young travelers were producing an estimated 160 million visitors and a global market values US\$173 billion a year (WYSE Travel Confederation, 2013). Additionally, the social and cultural benefits, for the young traveler and the communities that receive them are no doubt, long term and significantly more sustainable than other kinds of tourism (WYSE Travel Confederation, 2014).

Portugal is listed as ‘one to watch’ and a “must-see place” in 2014 (ABTA, 2014) and Porto has been awarded the Best European Destination in 2102 and 2014 (EBD Travel Organization, 2014). While these awards may attract further attention to the city, the segments of student and youth tourists may be extremely important to explore its potential. To be able to do this, it is necessary to have a deep knowledge of these segments in order to attract them and build a memorable experience.

This study focuses on the international students that chose the University of Porto (U.Porto) and more specifically its Faculty of Economics (FEP) for their Exchange studies. Regarding the specific target of this study, the figures show that the number of international students in U.Porto from different countries (Universidade do Porto, 2013b, 2013c) is growing year after year, as shown in Figure 2. In 2012/13, 1.789 students came from 40 different countries, a superior number compared to 1.633 in University of Lisbon (ULisboa, 2013).

According to the Activity Report of U.Porto (Universidade do Porto, 2012), the international students represent an important target and the university wants to attract more and more international students. To do so, the U.Porto and specifically FEP are adapting their offering, namely through the creation of additional courses taught in English, the enhancement of a cultural offering that complements the academic one, the organization of activities as workshops, welcome sessions, study visits, sports, and communication materials with information that is relevant for these students.

**Figure 2 - Students in mobility in at the University of Porto 2010-2013**



Source: adapted from Universidade do Porto (Universidade do Porto, 2013b)

However, in spite of a growing increase of students participating in this program, especially in Porto, the growth in participation numbers has stagnated or even declined in several countries. Some obstacles as financial, limited foreign language skills or lack of information about the program might be the reasons causing this decline (Vossensteyn et al., 2010). That is why it is crucial for students to have open access to communication and information material about Porto and FEP in their own countries, for example via internet and in their faculties. When abroad a good living and student experience may be important to recommend the place and university to others when returning home.

## 1.2 Goals and Relevance

The exchange that occurs both in the city and in university when students study abroad offers them the opportunity to learn different ways of communicating and interacting as well as to build up new knowledge. In many cases, traveling is the first motivation of students and that is why many of them decide to study in a new country. Tourism marketing can contribute to a better awareness of the choice of the destination, namely by identifying the factors that influence the selection of a study location (Mazzarol & Soutar, 2002). It is certain that developing youth tourism is an investment in future travels revenues. To maximize these benefits it is important that institutions, organizations and governments work together to stimulate and develop youth travel and try to articulate with universities to match this with Exchange students' travel.

In this context, the goal of this study is to identify the motivations that lead students from other countries to choose the U.Porto and more specifically the Faculty of Economics and the city of Porto to study, and to understand their expectations as well as their satisfaction levels with the learning and living experience they encountered.



A study on Exchange students' expectations, motivations and satisfaction is crucial to know if what is currently offered both by FEP and the city Porto meets the foreign students' expectations. Furthermore, the study will hopefully give a better understanding of this segment and provide hints on how to improve FEP and the city's positioning within this segment in the future. Namely, this study will provide the university and the city a better insight of this segment and help them adjust their offerings and explore new opportunities to attract and serve these young travelers.

A better understanding of the target can help to attract more and different students bringing advantages for FEP, like monetary benefits, diversity of classrooms, opportunities for local students and teachers of learning to operate in culturally diverse environments, so acting as a multi-valuable strategy (Lan, 2006).

### 1.3 Structure

Taking into account the subject and the items on which the research will focus, this work comprises five chapters, including this one, as follows: Chapter 2 presents and debates the existing literature on youth and students' travelling, e.g. their motivations, expectations and satisfaction level. Chapter 3 presents the research issues and discusses the methodology used in the empirical research; Chapter 4 the analysis and discussion of the data collected; Chapter 5 presents the study's conclusions and limitations and suggestions for future research.

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## CHAPTER 2 - MOTIVATIONS, EXPECTATIONS AND SATISFACTION OF INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS

This chapter starts reviewing some concepts that are central to the topic of the present study. First, international students as well as Erasmus Program are defined (Section 2.1). A small presentation of the Erasmus Program objectives and Erasmus Social is presented; this will allow us to understand if the objectives of Exchange students at FEP are aligned with the objectives of the Erasmus Program. Then, the chapter goes on with a brief description of the evolution of incoming international students at the U.Porto (Section 2.1.1). The following section (2.1.2) details the evolution of the Exchange students at FEP, the specific context of our empirical study. After the presentation of Erasmus Program, the literature review goes on with a discussion of three main core topics of our study. Section 2.2 debates the motivations and expectations of international students to study in a different country, namely their pull or push nature and discusses how expectations are formed presenting four areas that seem crucial to students' expectations when studying abroad. Then, section 2.3 gives an idea of how destination image is formed; Finally, in section 2.4 the study focuses the issue of satisfaction and its consequences.

## 2.1 International Students and Erasmus Program (EP)

Much of the research that explores the link between education and tourism focuses on students' exchange (Jarvis & Peel, 2009; Llewellyn-Smith & McCabe, 2008) who generally stay in the study place for less than a year and are therefore considered international visitors according to the WTO definition (World Tourism Organization, 1995). Within the student exchange context, the Erasmus Program is the main European program.

The word ERASMUS is the abbreviation of European Action Scheme for the Mobility of University Students. "ERASMUS is the European Union's flagship 'mobility' program in education and training and one of the best-known EU-level actions. It was established in 1987. It is part of the EU Lifelong Learning Program 2007-2013" (European Commission, 2008).

The Erasmus Program (EP) started in the European Community in the late 80s and is nowadays universally experienced. Following the idea of Sabbadin (Sabbadin, 2013), EP is considered the largest educational initiative in the European Union and the world. The same author refers that the EP strongly stimulates the student exchange in the world and, consequently, it promotes the mobility of students and teachers based on an academic experience.

According to Qualifax (Ireland's National Learners' Database) Erasmus programs enable students to engage themselves in the host country culture and to better understand its language (Mhuire, 2012). In the same vein, the manifesto published for the celebrations of the 25th anniversary of the Erasmus Program (European Union, 2012) states that:

*"Erasmus is today part of young people's lives across Europe. To 'go on Erasmus' or 'do an Erasmus' is understood all over Europe as a period of study or work abroad, learning languages and discovering a new culture and a new way of life".*

One of the objectives of the Erasmus Program is the creation of a European Higher Education Area, contributing to reinforce higher education and advanced vocational training in the process of innovation in Europe. Other objectives of the program are, for example, to contribute to the development of a high quality lifelong learning and its possibilities; to strengthen personal motivation, social cohesion, active citizenship and European citizenship; to promote the learning and the diversity of languages. However, we did not find any specific studies on the way these objectives are shared by international students. The present study aims at focusing some light on this issue.

EP promotes interculturalism, exchange of educational and work experiences, openness to other ways of being and living, reinforcing the Long Life Learning [LLL], which allows each individual to enrich and improve the awareness of himself and of the world around (Conselho Europeu, 2000). Furthermore, a specific Erasmus program, the Erasmus Social, aims at involving international students to participate in a university exchange in social and volunteering activities in the host country. This project promotes a social attitude among international students and facilitates their social integration into the local community also adding value to the diversity in Europe (Erasmus Student Network, 2013). In this study, we will explore if exchange students are motivated by these concerns and engaged in related activities.

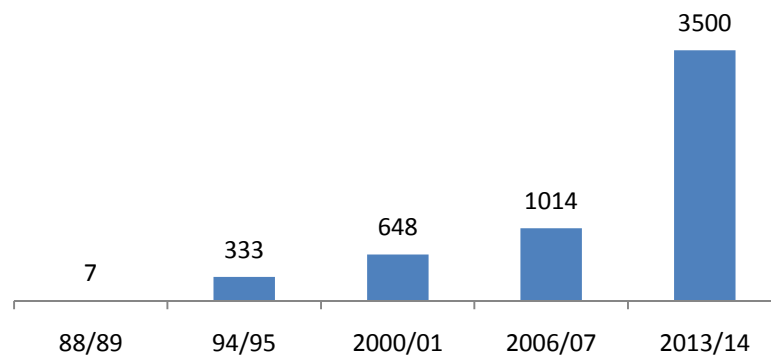
### **2.1.1 Exchange Program at the University of Porto**

The U.Porto is considered the best Portuguese University according to many international rankings. In fact, and according to the University Ranking by Academic Performance (URAP), the U.Porto is the only Portuguese institution integrating the top of the 200 best universities of the world. According to URAP's global evaluation, in 2013/14 U.Porto is classified in the 94th place at an European level and in the 219th place at the world level (METU and Informatics Institute, 2014).

U.Porto was founded in 1911 and is located in the city of Porto. The University houses 15 faculties and a business school, and 60 units of investigation, which are distributed by three campuses (City Center, Asprela and Campo Alegre) in different locations within the city. It offers a great variety of programs in different areas, from degrees to continuous professional training, enrolling about 30.000 students (Universidade do Porto, 2014).

The U.Porto participates in the Exchange Program and has several bilateral agreements with similar foreign institutions, which enables the mobility of students and teachers. In order to respond to the objectives of the Exchange program, U.Porto expected to involve about 3,500 foreign students and researchers under international mobility programs in 2013, as shown in Figure 3.

**Figure 3 - Students and researchers in mobility in & out at U.Porto 1988-2013**



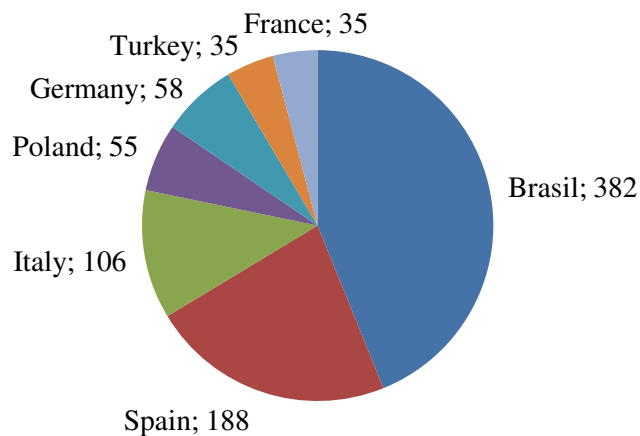
Source: Created on the basis of TVU, celebration video 25 years Erasmus

These numbers in Figure 3 reveal an effective growth, showing that the number has more than duplicated in the last seven years.

In order to introduce the new students to the University, U.Porto prepares a Welcome Session at the beginning of each academic year (Reis, 2013). This session works as an

important presentation as students are coming from five continents – native of 50 countries, and are staying at least one semester of studies in the faculties (Universidade do Porto, 2013b). In Figure 4 we can see the distribution of the students by countries: Brazil is the most representative, followed by Spain, maybe as a result of easiness of language.

**Figure 4 - Countries of foreign students at University of Porto in 2013**



Source: adapted from (Reis, 2013)

### 2.1.2 Exchange Program at Faculty of Economics

FEP is the School of Economic and Management of U.Porto. Founded in 1953, FEP is a national and international reference in the economics and management areas. It is located at the Asprela campus and its main building is classified as a monument of public interest. The faculty offers a wide range of programs, 2 Undergraduate programs in Economics and Management, 15 Masters programs and 2 PhD programs (FEP, 2014). Additionally, it offers executive programs through Porto Business School.

In the academic year of 2013/14, FEP had 194 international students. The correct word is Exchange students as it includes the Erasmus exchange, PLLA (Lusophone countries and Latin America Agreements), Erasmus Mundus (students who have a scholarship and have their origin in the Third Countries or not nationals of European countries), and Almeida Garrett Program (national program in which students may study at maximum one semester in other university of the country) (FEP, 2014). They came from 39 countries of the five continents and are distributed as in Table 1.

**Table 1 – Classification of Exchange students in FEP 2013/14**

Educational Cycles			
Undergraduate	Master	Doctoral	Researchers
111	78	2	3

Status	
Degree	Mobility
16	178

Program			
Erasmus	Mundus	PLLA	Almeida Garrett
128	32	32	2

Source: FEP Mobility department

The activities FEP organized to these students in 2013/14 were a welcome session (one in English and another in Portuguese), an initial level course of Portuguese and a picnic. FEP also offers a tutor program with the help of Portuguese students to provide each international student to have a Portuguese tutor to help him.

After characterizing the reality of Exchange students at U.Porto and FEP, we will now focus on the three main topics of our study, e.g. the motivations, expectations and satisfaction of international students.

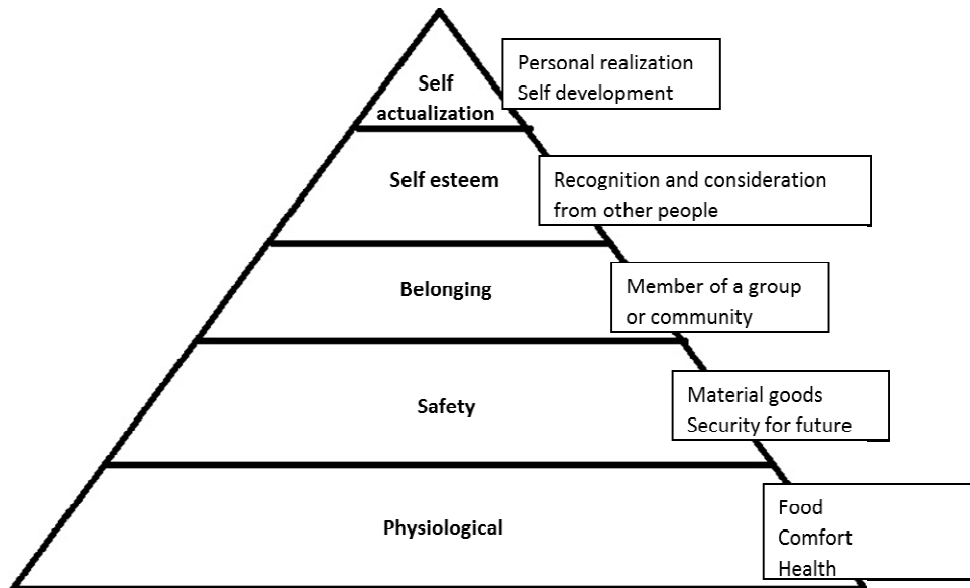
## 2.2 Motivations and Expectations of International Students

Taking into consideration that “motive is an internal, energy-giving force that directs a person’s activities towards satisfying a need or achieving a goal” (Dibb et al., 2006), it seems important to find out the motives that lead each student to choose Porto for his international program. Additionally, knowing that motivation has a structural function in the comprehension of social influence (Brito, 2011), it is important to understand if and how is international students social integration both at the university and in the city.

From the authors (Dibb et al., 2006), we can say that motivation forces and helps people, through persistency and will to achieve the goals they pursue. Motivation occurs in response to different kinds of needs and requirements (psychological, social, symbolical, hedonically and cognitive) which motivate people and lead them to act (Foxall & Goldsmith, 1994). For Maslow, as we see in Figure 5 the needs have five different levels and are categorized in the following pyramid.



Figure 5 – Maslow’s hierarchy of needs



Source: Adapted from Maslow’s pyramid (Maslow, 1954)

According to Maslow (Maslow, 1954), when the inferior need is fulfilled the individual can satisfy the superior one and goes up in the pyramid when the basic needs are satisfied. These unfulfilled needs lead to motivate people to action. The Erasmus goals can be reminded (already seen at Section 2.1) and compared with Maslow’s pyramid, as for example at the top of the pyramid we find self-development which may be compared to the strengthening of knowledge and the broadening of communication skills as well as the strengthen of personal motivation; at the belonging level, the importance of being member of a group or community can be compared to social cohesion and a better inclusion in the European and global level.

The outline of motivation to travel varies across the nations of Europe, according to the characteristics and needs of the individuals; for example young people travel for fun seeking, because they desire an active experience, or for socializing (TFL, 2008), while others choose for example Australia to travel seeking for sun, beaches and surf

(Coleman, 1999). When talking about studying, Hungary students go to Norway seeking for positive experiences in communicating with foreign people, some show interest in the Scandinavian culture and others want to improve their English (Ujlaki, 2007), while Chinese students prefer going to the United Kingdom considering as advantages: time saving, high educational quality and value for money (Lan, 2006).

Reflecting about the sequence of the choice, Mazzarol & Soutar defend that, to begin with, students are motivated to study overseas leading to their selection of the host country and host university (Mazzarol & Soutar, 2002). Teichler (2004) says that if living and learning contrasts were not big, students would not consider them sufficiently fascinating to accept the conditions for studying away from the traditional atmospheres.

The question now is: what motivates young people to travel? People choose to travel in order to achieve one of their needs. According to some authors (Chapman & Vetrak, 2013; Mazzarol & Soutar, 2002; Teichler, 2004) (Table 2), they are driven by two main groups of push (intangible) and pull (tangible) motivations. Push factors are related to the needs and wants of the traveler and pull factors are the features or attributes of the destination (Klenosky, 2002).

**Table 2 – Push and Pull motives for young people to travel**

Author	PUSH	PULL
<b>Klenosky (2002)</b>	Escape; Relax; Exploration; Social interaction; Desire of adventure; Learning; Excitement	Attractions; Facilities; Cultural motives; Nature
<b>Chapman &amp; Vetrak (2013)</b>	Desire to encounter different people, different places; Experience new things	Exploration of other cultures; Improvement of employability when returning home
<b>Babin &amp; Kim (2008)</b>	Travel	Understand culture and people; Fun; Safety; Educational benefits

		(learning through travel)
<b>Mazzarol &amp; Soutar</b> (2001; 2002)	Economic wealth; Educational opportunities	Historic links, Culture; Availability of course or program; High quality of education; Geographic proximity; Presence of family and friends
<b>Teichler</b> ( 2004)	Opportunity for self-development	Learning a foreign language; Academic learning experience in another country
<b>Llewellyn &amp; McCabe</b> ( 2008)	Desire to travel; Have fun; Excitement; Social interaction	Weather; Tourist and cultural attractions; Scenery and natural environment; Education
<b>Kim</b> (2008)	Desire to travel; Internal sources: getting away, adventure, discovering and learning	Destination choices; External sources: cultural opportunities, good access, convenient transportation
<b>Author</b>	<b>PUSH</b>	<b>PULL</b>

Source: Author

Different studies (Klenosky, 2002; Llewellyn-Smith & McCabe, 2008; Mazzarol & Soutar, 2002) show that the push factors are important to explain the desire people have to go on holidays and the pull factors are important to explain the choice of the destination. Kim & Jogaratnam (2008) view the push and pull motivations separately, stating that people are pushed by internal sources as the desire of adventure and then pulled by external sources as good transports at two different points. Within this context, push motivations occur before pull motivations (Fluker & Turner, 2000).

Understanding both kind of motives is important because it helps to identify factors that influence the decisions to travel of the individual and to better meet their desires,

requirements and consequences (Kim, 2008). In the same sense, it is important for a university to understand the motives for students to study there, as well as the main factors when selecting the faculty and an exchange program (Llewellyn-Smith & McCabe, 2008).

From Table 2, we can understand that young travelers who we assume are generally also students may travel to fulfill different needs. The desire to travel, the opportunity for fun and excitement, the idea of social interaction, are the primary push motivations for people to travel. On the pull side, factors like the will to learn a new language, the attractions encountered and the nature or links with their own countries appear as main motivators.

Although Klenosky (2002), Llewellyn & McCabe (2008) and Babin & Kim (2008) consider the push factors as desire to have fun and excitement, Mazzarol & Soutar (2001, 2002) refer other aspects more concrete as educational opportunities. For Babin & Kim (2008) people are pushed to travel and then to have fun and understand culture, factors that are related both to utilitarian and hedonic values. As we can also verify, the 'new' (push motive) awakens curiosity influencing the decision to travel and leads to the pull factors, motivating travel behavior like construction of knowledge and new forms of interaction and relationship. Also, Teichler (Teichler, 2004) considers that the opportunity for self-development is one of the main reasons that lead Erasmus students to study abroad; learning a foreign language and gaining academic learning experience in another country are also factors students have in consideration.

When considering the specific case of Porto, press refers some motives for students to choose this city to study: motivations like the climate and cost of living, the facility of languages and the geographical proximity are mentioned (Cardoso, 2008). The cost of living seems to be rather consensual as the U.Porto refers this cost as an argument to attract students in its programs' brochures (Universidade do Porto, 2013a). According to Instituto de Turismo (IPDT, 2011b), the main activities of tourists at Porto (considering

these as pull factors) are: to taste local gastronomy, shopping, see the landscape, visit monuments. Although this information relates to tourists in general, it seems reasonable to believe that it may apply to international students. In fact, it is expected that students don't limit their activity to the classes and to the classrooms space, but are also motivated and act as citizens in the fullest sense of the term, integrating the city life, interacting, trying typical dishes, learning the local language and customs, and discovering professional opportunities sometimes.

Hospitality, landscape and nature, lodging, historical heritage and cuisine are the main reasons of tourists' satisfaction about Porto (IPDT, 2011b). It is important to understand if youth travelers and students in particular also have these pull and push motivations and perceptions when deciding to come to Porto.

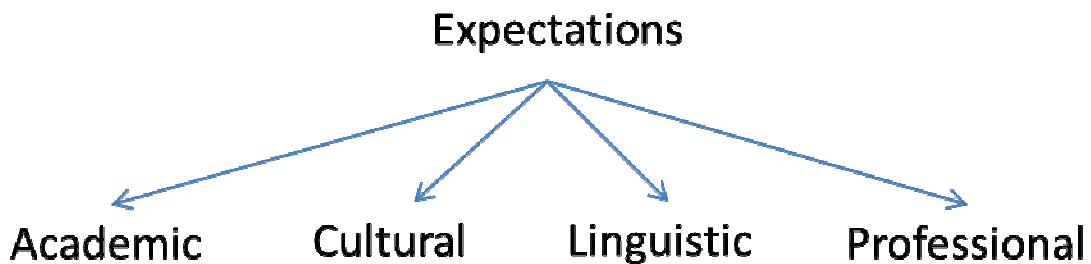
So far, this section has debated the motivation issue. Motivations are not sufficient to understand the levels of (dis)satisfaction of international students. To do so, we need to know their expectations related to what they will experience when studying abroad: if the reality meets the expectation and perception, there is satisfaction, if not, dissatisfaction occurs (Fluker & Turner, 2000).

It seems reasonable to assume that the goals outlined on the horizon of EP are connected with strengthening of knowledge and broadening of communication skills, to be able to make lucrative their skills for a better inclusion in the European level, and even, in a global level (Robson, 1992) may be express the main expectations of students involved in this program. However, there seems to be a lack of empirical studies that allow us to confirm if this is so.

For most young Europeans, to study in a new country is a voluntary option. This generation thinks more out of the box, is more informed, more mobile and more adventurous and open to new experiences than ever before (UNWTO & Wyse Travel

Confederation, 2011). According to Teichler (Teichler, 2004), there are four types of expectations associated with studying abroad, as shown in Figure 6.

**Figure 6 – Type of Expectations**



Source: adapted from Teichler (Teichler, 2004)

Thus, students expect to improve their language skills, experience a different culture and develop personally and see it as an opportunity to develop their careers (Maiworn & Teichler, 1997; Teichler, 2004). In a study with Hacettepe university students, expectations are (Oguz et al., 2010):

*“Language improvement, a better knowledge of the host country, possible changes on career, broadening their education, developing their personal values and their understanding of people from other cultures and ethnic background, enhancing interpersonal skills and building more confidence”.*

The report of UNWTO & Wyse Travel Confederation (2011) recognizes the importance of the exchange between countries more on the learning and culture experience than on the traveling. Thus tourism is focused more on the academic insight.

When researching expectations within the present study, we have to consider that studying abroad necessarily means moving to a new school in a new location for a shorter or a longer period. As the experience occurs both at the university and city

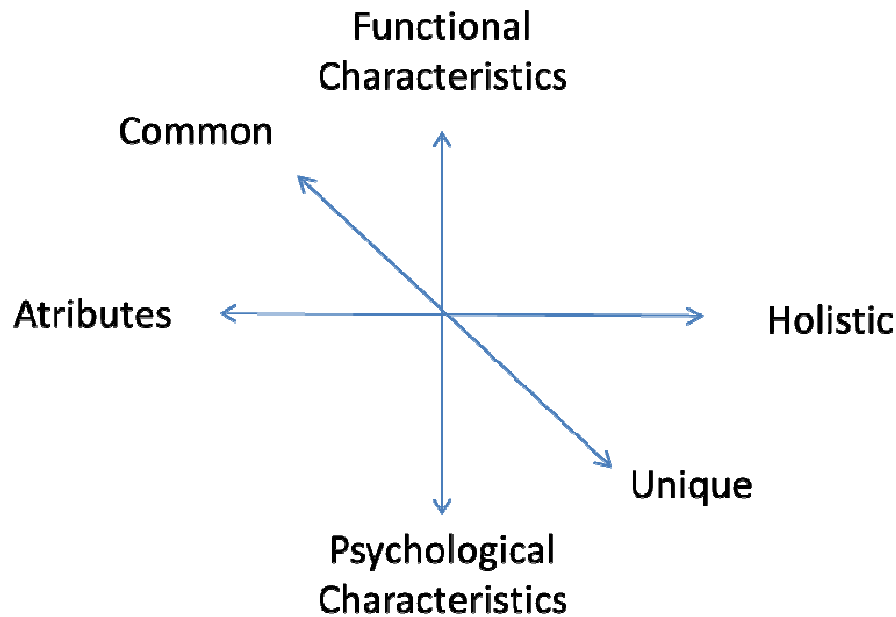
levels, the image that students may hold of their destination city may strongly influence their expectations and, consequently, their post-experience satisfaction. In line with this idea, the next section debates the topic of destination image.

### 2.3 Destination Image (City)

It is generally accepted that the destination image is in the basis of the destination selection process (Baloglu & McCleary, 1999; Choi & Sirakaya, 2001; Woodside & King, 2001). The destination image is a set of beliefs, feelings and multi-sensory representations of an individual to a tourist destination (Son & Pearce, 2005). Relating to the previous section, image may be seen as the perception of pull factors existing in a given destination.

Destination image is composed of many characteristics as landscape, good educational programs and other elements of the experience and their relative importance for destination choice may be different among individuals (Choi & Sirakaya, 2001). Echtner & Richie divide the destination image in three main dimensions, as in Figure 7.

**Figure 7 - Destination image components**



Source: Adapted from Echtner e Ritchie (2003)

One of the dimensions refers to an attribute-based / holistic image, as the destination image is raised up by the individual perception of the attributes (ex. nice staff) along with the global perception like mental pictures; Paris is perceived as being romantic. Individual attributes may be influenced by global impressions and feelings while holistic impressions have on its sources the interactions and combinations of attributes.

Another aspect to take in account is the functional / psychological nature of image. The functional aspect has its origin on functional features related to more tangible factors of the destination like price levels, transportation infrastructure, attractions, types of accommodation, climate, while the psychological characteristics are related to intangible elements as safety, level of friendliness, quality of service expected; Finally, the common / unique dimension assumes that touristic destination may have more elements that are common to other destinations (e.g., cost of living, climate or fame)



than other attributes that make a destination exclusive (e.g., Torre dos Clérigos in Porto, or Corcovado in Rio de Janeiro) or are common in a small number of destinations.

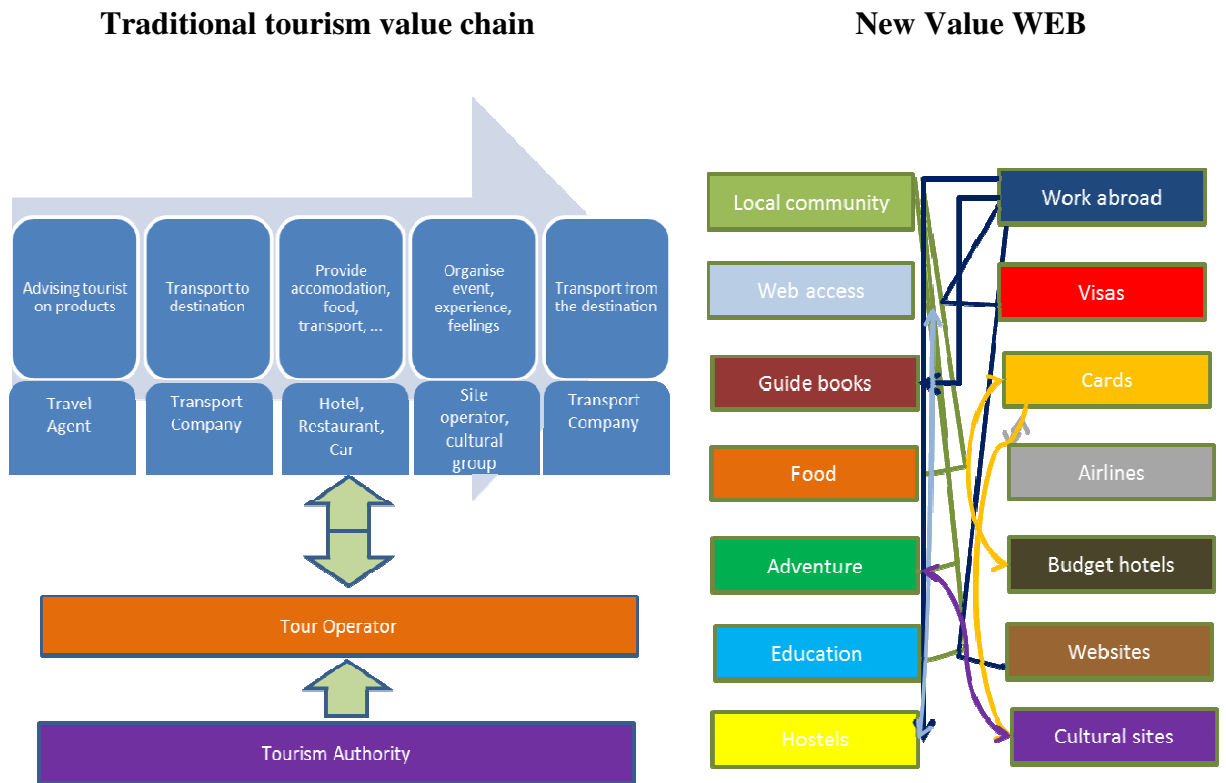
Following (Baloglu & McCleary, 1999) the opinions and recommendations of family and friends are an important and a real instrument when people are creating the image. A good experience may generate a positive image of the destination, followed by recommendation of the experience. Although these authors defend that when a real experience with the destination does not yet exist, aspects like affective, cognitive and sociodemographic factors, as well as the information sources selected by the individual are important in forming a destination image.

In fact, the destination image can be influenced by the available promotional material and information about the destination, the importance people give to some themes (e.g., violence, education, historical links, language spoken, landscape, and many others). Consequently, the destination image feeds the expectations, as it creates an image in people's mind leading to particular expectations about a destiny.

Nowadays, and for the formation of expectations, one of the examples of the inter-relationships between travel, other economic sectors and society as a whole have become so integrated that we might conceive of a 'value web' rather than the old value chain, as shown in Figure 8. People search for information in the media, in promotional material and find in the internet a lot of information that influences the expectations they build about the places, and also helps to explore new opportunities.

In focus groups students will be asked to talk about how they discovered information about Porto, what they knew about FEP and if they searched for information in usual traditional chains or in the web.

Figure 8 - Traditional tourism value chain vs. New value web



Source: adapted from The power of youth travel (UNWTO & Wyse Travel Confederation, 2011)

To sum up, the cognitive and affective natures of a destination image as well as the factors influencing the formation of the image like previous experience are essential to understand the motivations, expectations and the satisfaction levels of Exchange students. The next section debates the specific issue of satisfaction.

## 2.4 Satisfaction

Satisfaction is the evaluation of the quality of a service made after the experience. Satisfaction has been defined as “the result of customers’ assessment of a service based on a comparison of their perceptions of service delivery with their prior expectations” (Johnston & Clark, 2008). As for the service delivery regarding the satisfaction of customers needs, and considering the city as a bundle of service providers and FEP as being one service provider, the focus is on the three of the 7P’s of Marketing Mix for services, i.e., process, physical evidence and people. process – education or tourism need the customer presence when consuming the service, being the method offered a part of the experience. Perceptions and satisfaction are affected by operational aspects like friendliness of staff and flows of information; physical Evidence is related to the environment, the “feel” of the service, the appearance of the place and its cleanliness; regarding people, the level of development of staff who provide the service achieved by training and motivation, and at the present study the importance of the national boundaries, and to be aware of cultural differences. (Booms & Bitner, 1981; Dibb et al., 2006).

Exchanges with consumers may not only involve services but also goods or ideas, which in the case of a person studying abroad, is embodied in a bundle experienced through his or her interactions at the university and in the city. To respond to consumer needs and enable interaction, it is of great importance to have a good marketing strategy through positioning of the brand, good promotion, and a challenging price because consumers are affected by marketing campaigns (Dibb et al., 2006).

Consumer satisfaction may be emotional or affective and influences brand loyalty and is associated with repeated sales, positive word of mouth, and brand loyalty (Bearden & Teel, 1983). Brand loyalty exists when there is a very strong motive that leads an

individual to buy a particular product or service instead of another one (Dibb et al., 2006). In this case it is possible to show loyalty to the University and the city for example by returning to it to pursue studies or to visit, or recommending them to others.

The level of satisfaction with international experiences may be dependent on what a number of researchers have used to segment the college student travel market already seen before, including: travel motivations (Klenosky, 2002) and personal hedonic and utilitarian value perceptions as well as travel experiences (Babin & Kim, 2001). However, there is little knowledge of existing links between the education and travel experience in the host country (Glover, 2011).

As explained before, several motivation and expectation factors affect international students' decision to study overseas and to choose a particular country (Llewellyn-Smith & McCabe, 2008; Tim Mazzarol & Soutar, 2002).

Similar to tourist destination choice factors and students motivations, factors related to satisfaction can be categorized into push and pull factors (Mazzarol & Soutar, 2002). Among the push factors are the desire to travel (Babin & Kim, 2001) and educational opportunities (Mazzarol & Soutar, 2002). As pull factors for satisfaction, academic reasons play a major role. They include the availability of a course or program that is unavailable in the home country (Mazzarol & Soutar, 2001), the perceived high quality of education in the host country (Mazzarol & Soutar, 2001), and the reputation of the host institution (Goldbart et al., 2004).

After knowing the motivations and expectations, it can thus be argued that the educational and academic characteristics of the study destination have a similar influence on the destination choice as the visitor attractions at a tourist destination, to the satisfaction level.

If the expectations are met or exceeded, students may recommend the city and/or university (Babin & Kim, 2001). In this case, they may assume the role of an

“Exchange ambassador”, which is considered an important and relevant role in the European scene, as it contributes not only for the promotion of students’ mobility, but also to build a healthy practice of intercultural, develop of linguistic and communicational competences. Naturally, if dissatisfaction occurs, negative word of mouth may emerge, with a negative impact on the image of both the university and the city. In this specific context, one of the topic this research will explore is the willingness of international students studying in FEP to become ambassadors of the university in their own countries, as a result of their learning and living experience.

## 2.5 Conclusion

Motivations occur from different needs people have and can vary from one person to another. When deciding to study abroad, the desire to travel is one of the most mentioned factors. The destination image is formed from a variety of physical and mental factors and influences the individuals’ expectations about a place.

During their stay at the hosting university and city, the learning and living experience is continuously compared to the motivations and expectations that drove students in the first place. The outcome of that comparison will result in further action, such as positive or negative word of mouth, active recommendation or repeat visits.

Knowledge about students and particular Exchange students’ motivations, expectations and satisfaction is still scarce, especially in Porto, as there are no studies on the Exchange students in this city and particularly studying in FEP. Thus, the general goal of this study is to contribute to further existing knowledge of this topic. The next chapter presents the research issues and the methodology used in the empirical research.

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## CHAPTER 3 - RESEARCH GOALS AND METHODOLOGY

This chapter begins with the definition of the main goal of this research and presents the five questions which are expected to be answered in the data collected (section 3.1). The chapter then presents a conceptual framework based on the literature review and which will be used for the discussion of the data. Section 3.2, presents the methodology adopted in the empirical investigation.

### 3.1 Research goals and conceptual framework

The main goal of this research is to understand the motivations, expectations and satisfaction levels regarding FEP and Porto, of Exchange students enrolled in FEP's programs and how these will influence their future behavior. As for the research questions, it is important to consider the fact that living abroad can provoke a culture shock and may produce negative effects in the individual mainly when students start daily routines without being integrated and without having established friendships. In a more detailed way, this project aims to answer to the next questions:

Q1: Why and how do Exchange Students choose Porto and FEP to study?

Q2: What are the expectations of EXCHANGE students regarding FEP and the city of Porto?

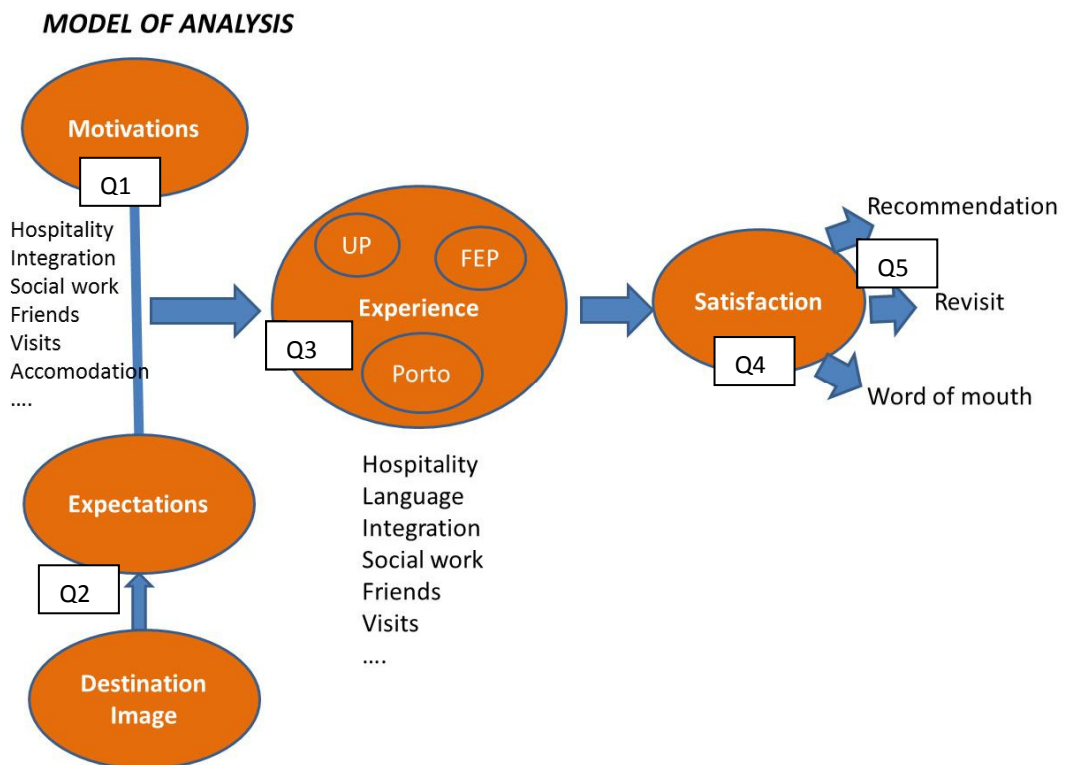
Q3: How was the experience of living in Porto and studying at FEP?

Q4: How satisfied are they about FEP and Porto experience and why?

Q5: What is their intended behavior regarding FEP and Porto?

These research questions are encapsulated in a research framework, based on the previous literature review.

**Figure 9 - Conceptual framework**



Source: Author

This research will begin by exploring the motivations and expectations of the international students on the city of Porto and FEP and will then focus on their experience. To feel integrated in the new community may require an active participation in daily life routines, the involvement in the activities of the university and with local students. The cultural shock may also depend on the type of personality, experience previously lived, support of family and friends and language skills (ICUnet.AG, 2008). Afterwards it is crucial to understand the Exchange students' satisfaction with Porto and FEP experience.

## 3.2 Methodology

The main goal is to know Exchange students' motivations, expectations and satisfaction about Porto and FEP. For this purpose, the project adopts an exploratory research methodology. Exploratory research has as objective to generate maximum insights about an issue and so to explore and search through a given situation. The sample is usually small and non-representative; exploratory research is broad in focus, aims to identify key issues and variables, uses words rather than numbers and is used when there is a lack of knowledge about the topic being study (C. Brito, Fonseca, & Pinto, 2010; Malhotra, 2004; Pattom & Cochran, 2002).

### 3.2.1 Qualitative Methodology

This qualitative methodology is considered adequate to obtain information on different experiences and how these experiences and attitudes can affect needs and behaviors of individuals (Pattom & Cochran, 2002), as it is the goal of the present study. This type of



methodology explores problems or situations, understands facts or circumstances and answers questions analyzing data that is unstructured (QSR, 2014). The aim of this research requires an in-depth exploration of experiences that are better captured through the narration and description of those individual who lived them. To do so, it is advisable to use a flexible method which allows to highlight the kind of observations and feelings that involve participants thus analyzing and explaining the issues with different approaches (Mack et al., 2005).

Qualitative research is concerned with human behavior, and provides a richer and deeper understanding of feelings, experiences and opinions that are explored through questions like How, Why and What (Association of Qualitative Research, n.d.), as it is the case of this study. There are several qualitative research methods, such observation of participants, in-depth interviews and focus groups. Different methods can be used alone or be complementary thus creating multiple sources of evidence (Yin, 2009).

Qualitative techniques often imply the choice of small samples, subjective techniques such as focus groups for a global interview and projective techniques to encourage the thought and the imagination of the persons involved and stimulate the perception of the issues discussed (Malhotra, 2004). It is followed by the analyses of the collected data and its interpretation (Anderson, 2006; Hancock et al., 2009).

This study uses focus-groups with exchange students as the main source of data. Some interviews with the people in charge of exchange program of FEP and reports from FEP and U.Porto were also used to gather general information about the exchange students and their study plans. The next section further explains the option for a focus-group technique.

### 3.2.1.1 Focus Groups

Focus groups were originally conceived as a tool of marketing investigation, and thereafter are being used in other areas. A focus group is an interview conducted by a moderator interacting with the elements of a small group of participants in an unstructured and natural way. The main purpose is to gain insights by listening to a group of people talking about issues of interest to the researcher. It is expected that the free-flowing group discussion may result in unexpected findings from a (Malhotra, 2004; Turauskas & Vaitkuniene, 2014). The group must come from the appropriate target market, i.e., participants must be chosen according to the research theme. Thus, Focus-groups integrated exchange students exchange enrolled in different programs at FEP.

Focus groups may provide great insights, topics and views that can be explored in a more detailed way and various hypotheses of the issue can be raised. The method is quick in providing data and the analysis is done not in an individual level but at the group level (Morgan., 1996; Patten & Cochran, 2002). As disadvantages we can mention the difficulty to meet the groups and the fact that the collected data is not easy to analyze (Oliveira & Freitas, 1998). In this study, meetings were arranged and re-arranged, the collected data was reviewed several times to make sure that the most important issues were covered.

Focus groups generally originate discussions, conversation and reactions taken in an informal way, the consumers being stimulated to reply to questions in their own words (Dibb et al., 2006; Mack et al., 2005). The groups should have between 6 and 12 homogeneous participants, experienced in the subject in discussion (Dibb et al., 2006; Morgan., 1996; Turauskas & Vaitkuniene, 2014). A relaxed and informal atmosphere is advisable to encourage spontaneous comments. It is recorded for subsequent replay, transcription and analysis (and interpretation). Videotaping has the advantage of recording some gestures and the expressions of the face (Malhotra, 2004).

### 3.2.1.2 Projective techniques

Projective techniques have been increasingly in qualitative marketing research and are indirect forms of making questions encouraging participants to project their beliefs, attitudes or feelings regarding a particular issue. Dibb (2006, p. 173) defines projective techniques as “tests in which subjects are asked to perform specific tasks for particular reasons, while actually being evaluated for other purposes”. Presenting to participants unstructured and ambiguous stimulus may have in return the discovery of innermost beliefs, attitudes, feelings and motivations of individuals.

Projective techniques can be divided in word association, choice ordering and expressive, construction or completion (Vidal et al., 2013). The most used type of these techniques are the Association Techniques used to get prompt responses with the first thing in his/their mind. The best known projective technique is Word Association, which consists of giving a word and expecting the participant to give his first (or more) associated word, image or thoughts in mind (Dibb et al., 2006; Malhotra, 2004; Vidal et al., 2013). This technique will also be used to determine participants’ attitudes, feelings and beliefs.

The use of colors is also an important technique and will be analyzed in focus groups to understand participants’ attitudes and feelings. The connotations associated with colors may vary across different cultures. For example, the color black has a negative significance in Europe being associated to old, expensive, death, on opposed to the Middle East, where it has a positive meaning, connected to wealth and prosperity. These cultural differences and country’s customs may have implications and affect perceptions and attitudes towards products, advertising or services. Consumers’ perceptions about an issue are influenced by many things, such as reputation, quality, and marketing.

Nevertheless, perceptions of colors across cultures are not so different (Dibb et al., 2006).

### 3.2.2 Data collection

The access to students was facilitated by the Mobility department of FEP, which provided a list of names and emails of the Exchange students enrolled in each of FEP program. After that an e-mail message was sent to each student explaining the purpose of the work and asking them to participate in focus groups. Messages were left on Facebook groups of FEP and some were contacted directly. Thereafter and relying on who has agreed to participate and their availability, the meetings were arranged. An important criteria to the organization of the groups was the language spoken (essentially English and Spanish) by the students. Every group was composed homogeneously by Exchange mobility and degree students, who are spending one or two semesters in FEP (15) and degree students, the ones who are following the whole program being at least two years in FEP (12).

Four groups, henceforth known as FG1, FG2, FG3 and FG4 were constituted. The participants will be identified by the number of the focus group followed by their number (randomly distributed), as for example FG1.1. The groups had between 6-8 participants in order to allow each of its participants to say something about the topic and feel comfortable to share their opinions with one another (Dibb et al., 2006; Malhotra, 2004). The four focus groups' composition is described in Table 3.

**Table 3 - Focus Groups participants' profile**

Data	Participants			
	FG1	FG2	FG3	FG4
<b>Gender</b>	3 Male 3 Female	5 Male 1 Female	1 Male 6 Female	6 Male 2 Female
<b>Age</b>	22 to 37	22 to 29	21 to 32	23 to 39
<b>Nationality</b>	Luxembourg Brasil (2) Guinea Bissau Spain Italy	Mexico S. Tomé e Principe Spain (4)	Romania Bulgaria Vietnam India (3) Turkey	India Tajikistan Indonesia Egypt Fiji Islands Iran Georgia Belarus
<b>Type of Program</b>	Undergraduate program in Economics (3) Undergraduate Program in Management (1) Master in Marketing (1) Master in Finance (1)	Undergraduate program in Economics (1) Undergraduate Program in Management (4) Master in Finance and Taxation (1)	Undergraduate program in Economics (2) Master in Management (2) Master in Finance (3)	Master in Management (4) Master in Finance (2) Phd in Marketing Strategy (1) Management Master in Human Resources Economics and Management (1)

Source: Author

This table shows well-balanced figures according to gender and age in total number and in the FG1 but not so balanced in the other three groups, having a predominance of man

or woman. The ages were between 21 and 39 years old. This difference on ages also takes us to the different level of courses they follow. The distribution of participants per program is depicted in Figure 10.

**Figure 10 – Participants by type of course**



Source: Author

The undergraduate programs of Economy and Management and the Masters in Finance and in Management are the most represented. This is due to two main reasons: (1) international exchange is much more intensive in undergraduate levels than in master levels; (2) the two masters are fully taught in English and are also subject to international agreements that attract international students;. In FG4 there are no students from undergraduate programs.

The language spoken in groups 1 and 2 was Portuguese, while the English language was spoken in the other two. Participants came from several countries, but although there were many countries present, Spain, followed by India, was the country more represented.

### 3.2.2.1 Carrying out the Focus Groups

On the very first e-mail contact with the participants, they were introduced to the interview objectives and to a summarized contextualization of what would be asked. In case of acceptance, the availability of the group was evaluated according to the meeting duration and place. Finally, it was found a date that was convenient for all the participants.

A script resulting from the literature review and the research questions was built in order to guide the discussion in every group (cf. Annex 2) and to allow for its comparison later on. It consisted of a very limited number of questions because it is easy to focus and in order for students to have time to give their own opinions and do not feel loaded with questions. The questions were designed with the purpose of keeping the discussion focused in the predefined topics, although they were fundamentally open. The script includes three group of questions, beginning with the most general, followed by the one focused in their city life experience, and finishing with more specific questions directly related with FEP and their experience as students of this institution, as follows: (1) reasons for studying abroad and sequence of choice, (2) expectations, experience and satisfaction about the city of Porto, (3) expectations, experience and satisfactions about FEP.

The observation criteria used was the structured one which is exploratory, planned, but without influence. Therefore, we can consider that there was a high level of standardization as long as the same plan of questions was used in every group as well as identical procedures (resources, presentation of items, and number of participants). People were stimulated to discuss and give open opinions about questions related to the objectives of this work, in the focus groups. The moderator was a participant observer having an active position, presenting each question and giving place for discussion but also preventing the participants from diverging. Thus, there was a structured discussion,

with the moderator controlling the discussed topics and the group dynamics, namely trying to get a balanced participation of every participant in the discussion.

The focus-groups took place in FEP between June and July of 2014. Classrooms were used because they are fairly known place to everyone and it was easier for the students to meet. The rooms had much space and were equipped with chairs which number could be adapted to the quantity of participants, in form of a circle, and with conditions for installing the devices necessary for the audio and video recording of the conversations. The discussions in the four groups lasted from 1:45 to 2:30 hours and were recorded in audio and video.

Before beginning the interviews, and while the participants were arriving in the place, a short form was delivered, for self-filling of relevant identification data for the present research (cf. Annex 1). It was important to know the personal identification, such as name and age, program attended, nationality and contact, useful for subsequent analysis.

At the beginning of each session, the moderator introduced herself and thanked the students for their participation. The objectives of the research and its contextualization in the research were explained and the importance of the participation of everybody was remarked. The moderator asked permission to use recording equipment, with the guarantee that everyone would remain anonymous. Following this moment, each participant presented himself or herself, starting by their name, country of origin and description of something they liked in the city of Porto, and then the moderator went through the items of the discussion plan.

### 3.2.3 Data analysis

After recording via audio and video, the process was the transcription of the data following data integrity. Data was collected by continuous listening and by transcription



of the audio and video records of each group to written text, and by reviewing the notes taken during the sessions. The transcriptions were divided by focus group and then by country of origin and by type of program.

Given the objectives of this work, general procedures were important to follow as: paying attention when a new theme came up, the specificity of the details of experiences and the involvement of the participant with the subject (visual observations to understand the reinforcement of participants’ perspectives). Data was analyzed discovering what was most repeated and what should be passed to others.

Data analysis was supported by a description and a summary of what each participant of the focus group said in relation to each item and the comparison between the participants and groups. Sometimes there are limitations to the analysis, for example one item talked cannot be the most important, and people can be distracted or talking at the same time.

One of the most used forms for interpreting the qualitative data is by coding. The code is a category used to read the data composed by groups of words or sentences (C. Brito, 1999; Pattom & Cochran, 2002). In exploratory research, the categories are the basis to organize the content and the object of the analysis (Freitas et al., 1998). The categories created to organize the data are presented in Table 4.

**Table 4 - Categories for data analysis**

General	Reasons for study abroad Sequence of choice	
City of Porto	Motivations and expectations	
	Experience	Accommodation
		Daily life
		Story, Event
Satisfaction, recommendation		

FEP	Motivations and expectations	
	Experience	Reception
		Life in FEP
		Facilities
	To be improved	
Satisfaction, recommendation		

Source: Author

These categories were created after an exhaustive work of analysis to the data collected, exploration of what stands out, and comparing to the objectives of the work and research issues. After the three groups already created (General, City of Porto and FEP), the data collected originated more specific and most important categories for each other.

### 3.3 Conclusion

After the presentation of the research goals and the conceptual framework, it was decided to adopt an exploratory research, using qualitative data through focus groups and projective techniques as word association and the use of colors. The constitution of focus groups was presented as well as the categories for the data analysis. The next chapter presents and discusses the findings of the empirical research phase.

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## CHAPTER 4 - PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

This chapter presentation discusses the study findings. It begins with the findings regarding their decision to study abroad (4.1), secondly the questions about the city of Porto (4.2) and finally the questions about FEP (4.3).

### 4.1 Studying abroad

#### *Reasons for studying abroad*

Table 5 summarizes participants' reasons for studying abroad.

**Table 5 – Reasons for studying abroad**

Focus Group	Exchange	Country / City / Faculty
FG1	<p>“in my country we have to do an Erasmus program to get a diploma” (FG1.1)</p> <p>“a program like that improve our skills, study abroad open mind, improves</p>	<p>“I always wanted to do a master in Portugal” (FG1.1)</p> <p>“Had promotion material of U.Porto in my country, so my process was to study here, by FEP’s reputation” (FG1.2)</p>

	<p>mentality” (FG1.5)</p> <p>“I was in my last year and had to go for Erasmus” (FG1.3)</p>	<p>“I wanted a town with sea, not big or too small” (FG1.5)</p>
FG2	<p>“in my school is very important to have an international experience” (FG2.1)</p> <p>“We have to do an Erasmus and I wanted a country with similarities to mine” (FG2.6)</p>	<p>“I wanted to know other country, another language, another experience” (FG2.4)</p> <p>“I wanted to learn Portuguese as my goal is to go to Brasil” (FG2.5)</p>
FG3	<p>“I needed to do and wanted an European country“ (FG3.1)</p> <p>“..decided because I had a scholarship and to get more exposure” (FG3.3)</p> <p>“I decided to develop my English and because it is an opportunity of a different experience” (FG3.4)</p>	<p>“I wanted to see how it is to be a student in another university and also I thought it would be a great challenge for me to be on my own in a foreign country” (FG3.6)</p> <p>“I love the country and people, so I didn’t choose to study abroad; I chose to study in Portugal” (FG3.7)</p>
FG4	<p>“Good chance to have a scholarship” (FG4.1)</p> <p>“it is important to get a good job” (FG4.2)</p> <p>“A good opportunity to do Erasmus Mundus with a scholarship” (FG4.3)</p> <p>“had to do it and it is quite obvious, to be in a better place in social hierarchy among academies and society” (FG4.6)</p>	<p>“I didn’t choose Portugal and did not know where it was; the only thing I knew was Brazil and people told me it was the same language” (FG4.4)</p>

Source: Author

These motives expressed by participant are a combination of push and pull motives (Mazzarol & Soutar, 2002; Teichler, 2004). It is interesting to stress that regarding the option to study abroad, the obligation and need to do an Erasmus period of study was the most mentioned reason in all groups, as well as having a scholarship. Contrary to what expected according to the literature (UNWTO & Wyse Travel Confederation, 2011) fewer view this as a voluntary option.

The results confirm the literature in what concerns the choice of the country/city/faculty as a reason to study abroad, depending on the needs and characteristics of individuals and varying across nations (TFL, 2008). Some participants already have heard of Portugal and the choice was a conscious decision while others did not know much about the country but considered a challenge to be in a new place, discover new culture and have a new way of life.

*Sequence of choice*

After the decision to study abroad, most participants had to decide between three destinations and Portugal was one of them, as shown in Table 6.

**Table 6 – Sequence of choice**

Focus Group	Sequence of choice
FG1	<p>“The first option was another country but I was afraid of the language. Then, in Portugal, had to decide between Coimbra and Porto and decided Porto as it is closer to the sea; then chose FEP because of the program” (FG1.1)</p> <p>“My process was to Portugal and then FEP for the reputation and because in my country there are brochures about the faculty and I thought if FEP has that kind of</p>

	<p>advertising it is good” (FG1.2)</p> <p>“I chose three countries that had this program and then I was selected” (FG1.3)</p> <p>“I could choose among 5 destinies and then between two, and I chose Portugal influenced by a friend. Porto was the only option” (FG1.4)</p> <p>“For me, first were the course, town and then FEP... the program is similar” (FG1.5)</p> <p>“First chose Portugal and then Porto, my university has a convenio with FEP” (FG1.6)</p>
FG2	<p>“Had 5 options but then [considering] my level of English and areas of interest, Porto was my first option” (FG2.1)</p> <p>“First the course, and then the city” (FG2.2)</p> <p>“Decided for Portugal as it was cheaper than the other country and similarity of the language, and Porto/FEP as it is a public faculty instead of another private in Lisbon” (FG2.3)</p> <p>“I chose Porto and FEP influenced by friends” (FG2.4) (FG2.5)</p> <p>“Portugal because the language is similar to mine and Porto as it is a cheaper city compared to other European cities” (FG2.6)</p>
FG3	<p>“It was obvious as in my area it was the only option” (FG3.2)</p> <p>“It was in my first three positions, and I chose it because I wanted a country where I could easily learn the language since my mother tongue is also Latin, and FEP because of reputation” (FG3.6)</p> <p>“The country was my first and only choice... if I did not study in Portugal would not study abroad. Porto, however, was my third option in terms of desire but it was the only one I sent my application. I chose FEP because of the program field” (FG3.7)</p>

FG4	<p>“I chose the country and then was told that university of Porto is the best” (FG4.2)</p> <p>“I sent an e-mail for some universities and decided by Portugal as we have some legacy of it, and Porto as I need to have a proposal and the university replied me quickly” (FG4.3)</p> <p>“It was my third option, I didn’t choose Portugal and did not know where it was, only knew it had the same language as Brasil (FG4.4)</p> <p>“Came to FEP because my friends told me about it” (FG4.6)</p> <p>“We had a lot of options but I chose FEP because of the ranking and Portugal is a sunny country” (FG4.7)</p>
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Source: Author

In line with the literature, most of the participants of this study firstly decided to study abroad and only after that they choose the country and then the university (Mazzarol & Soutar, 2002). But for others the sequence was different as they wanted only one specific course, like Finance. One participant stated that “In Finance, it [FEP] was the only college with an agreement with my university” (FG3.2), making it a straight forward choice. After choosing the course, they normally chose the town and then FEP. In some cases it was the only university in Portugal having an agreement with their own countries and many of them already had the image that the U.Porto is the best to study.

One student was divided between Italy and Portugal but decided based on “I had a friend who studied here last year and told me here in Porto there are many different nationalities and in Italy would be only Spanish people, and for that I would stay in my country (FG1.4)”. The destination image was important to decide, as it was the course, the educational program, and the influence of friends.

The information process is also in line with the New Value Web represented in Figure 8.

Only one student looked for information in a travel agency, while all the others searched about Portugal, Porto and FEP in the web, google, maps, travelling and information blogs, e-mailed other students, looked in courses' ranking, and in FEP site and in Sigarra where one can find information about the city and daily life issues.

## 4.2 About the City of Porto

In this section about the city of Porto the focus is on the motivations and expectations about the city, the accommodation, the daily life and remarkable stories, and the level of satisfaction.

### *Motivations and Expectations about Porto*

Understanding these motives and the different types of expectations is mentioned in the literature (Kim, 2008) as important to identify the aspects which influence people to travel to the city and to try to meet their desires, although not all of them are achievable or can be realized, like expecting a bigger city. Destination image gives forces to expectations being critical to the choice of the destination Table 7 sums up the findings on the motivations and expectations about Porto students had before coming.



**Table 7 – Motivations and Expectations of Exchange students about Porto**

Focus Group	Motivations and Expectations
FG1	<p>“I was told that Porto is dangerous at night” (FG1.1)</p> <p>“I was surprised, thought the city would be bigger, that had more population. it is an absurd impact to enter in the metro at 7pm and have a sit; in my city is very complicated” (FG1.2)</p> <p>“I had already been here before, so I already knew, different from others, like Lisbon that is too big” (FG1.4)</p> <p>“I thought would have some difficulties with the language, but everybody speaks English, my hairdresser, bartender..” (FG1.5)</p> <p>“I imagined it like it is, with castles, the words used, the shock was with climate” (FG1.6)</p>
FG2	<p>“I expected more sun because of the beach, thought the food would not be so different from my country, everything is spicy” (FG2.1)</p> <p>“I thought the city would be bigger” (FG2.5)</p> <p>“Already knew the city” (FG2.4)</p>
FG3	<p>“I expected it much more bigger” (FG3.2)</p> <p>“I had no expectations as it is the first time” (FG3.3)</p> <p>“Expected bigger but like it, you can go everywhere walking and find everything” (FG3.4)</p> <p>“It was some months ago and I don’t remember, very well, but maybe sunny” (FG3.5)</p>

	<p>“Life cost and food are higher than expected” (FG3.6)</p> <p>“I didn’t really have any [expectations], but ended up satisfied enough” (FG3.7)</p>
FG4	<p>“Expected a peaceful place and low price compared to Lisbon” (FG4.3)</p> <p>“It is prettier than I thought, only googled about the city and knew Lisbon, Ronaldo and Jose Manuel, the coach” (FG4.4)</p> <p>“the only things I knew before was Port wine and Porto football team, Mourinho..; expected it was bigger, having at least 1 million people as I was told it is the second city of Portugal” (FG4.7)</p> <p>“Expected some things were not so slow comparing to my country (banks, SEF,..)” (FG4.1)</p> <p>“I didn’t expect much and knew nothing unless Cristiano Ronaldo, didn’t expect people to speak English” (FG4.5)</p>

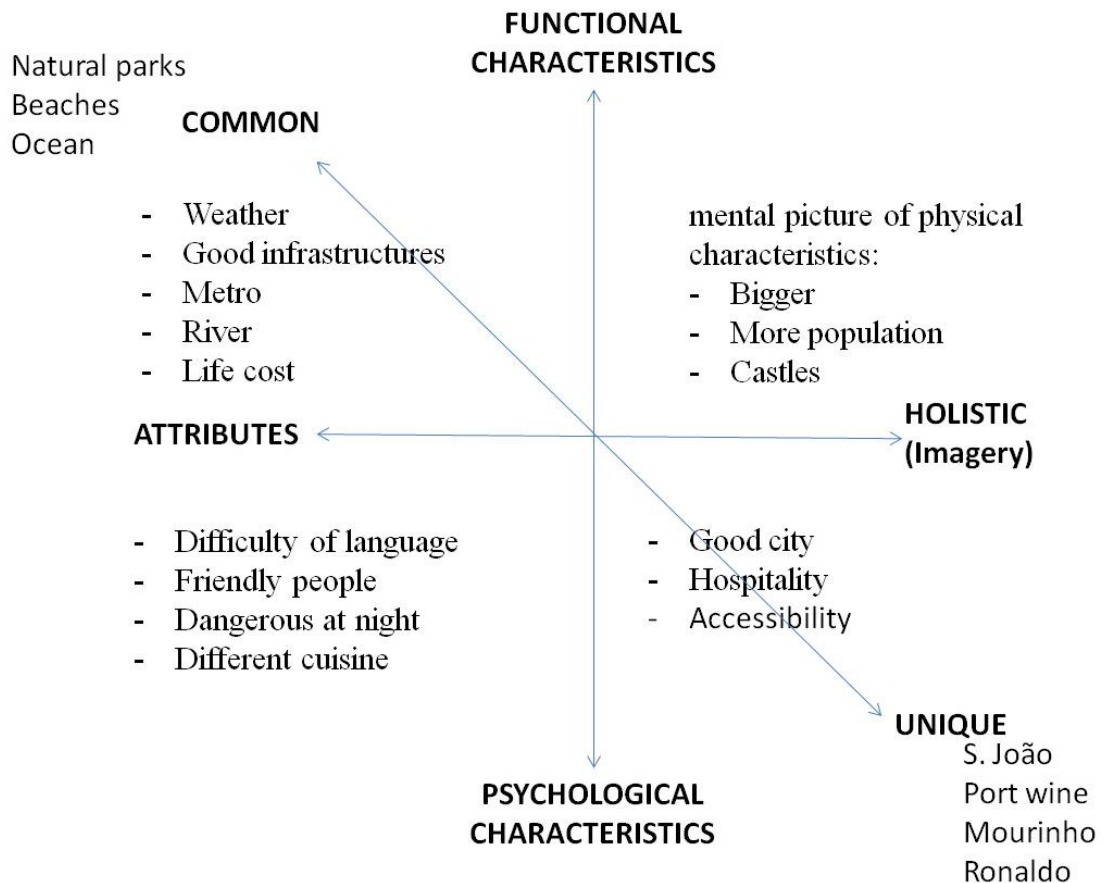
Source: Author

In all groups the size of the city was mentioned as being smaller than what they expected, although they prefer like this way, in comparison with Lisbon, because it turns to be easier to go from one place to another, everything being nearer, and permitting the Exchange students to attend the same places and to be easily together. Although the actual perception is positive, one evidence is that the image most of the students had before coming to Porto was not confirmed. Some of them didn’t expect too much as they only knew some of Portuguese “treasures, like Mourinho, or Port wine”. During the focus group and also doing at the same time an observation of attitudes and feelings, it was easy to understand that most of them had positive expectations and, despite not all of them were real achieved (like expecting a bigger city), they all looked happy and satisfied with what they have found.

Curiously, the results also confirm the literature as some motives for students to choose Porto to study were in the opinion of Cardoso (2008) the climate, cost of living, facility of communication and geographical proximity. The push motive “experience a new life” (FG4.8) and pull motives “geographical proximity” (FG2.3) or “having a connection to the country” (FG4.5), were mentioned.

Based on these finding, Figure 11 proposes a model of the destination image for Porto.

Figure 11 - Porto image components



Source: Author, adapted from Echtner e Richie (2003)

As mentioned in literature, destination image is a set of various cognitive and affective features perceived by an individual (Son & Pearce, 2005). On the dimension of attributes / holistic we have the perception of the attributes, like friendly people, and in the other side mental pictures as castles; in the functional nature of image there are more tangible aspects such as infrastructure, while in psychological, the intangible aspects, as dangerous were mentioned; in the dimension common / unique, we have the ocean which can be common to other destinations and S. João which is unique in Porto. All these dimensions contribute to the perception of a destination.

The findings revealed positive features about the city (good city, friendly people). Nevertheless, negative dimensions were mentioned, the city to be dangerous at night (intangible element as safety need) and the difficulty for some people to communicate. The identification of a symbol for the city like Porto wine or Mourinho and Ronaldo (although this one more connected to the country rather than to the city) helps promoting the choice of participants and is an element of differentiation from other cities.

### *Accommodation*

The atmosphere is straightly connected to the students' well-being dependent of the accommodation they found. Since the city's atmosphere fascinates them, most of them prefer to live downtown and to take the metro to the university. The main reasons for choosing the city center were the closeness to night life, to know the city better and also the fact that metro does not travel late at night, as shown in Table 8.

**Table 8 – Exchange students’ accommodation experience**

Focus Group	Accommodation
FG1	<p>“I didn’t wanted a place near FEP for my life to be not only Home/FEP and FEP/home, so I am staying at the city center where it happens the night life” (FG1.1)</p> <p>“I tried the residence but then a friend arranged me a place with an old lady, in Gaia, I felt in love with her she’s really sweet and I could not get out of there anymore” (FG1.2)</p> <p>“FEP did not helped us to find a place but I am staying in a home where a friend was before... easy to go out at night” (FG1.4)</p> <p>“I decided to stay in a hotel in the first days and then found a home, the real help came from Erasmus Student Network (ESN), who gave me a list of places. FEP only told ‘you have this and that and now find it! They did not tell us how far it was and which was better’” (FG1.5)</p> <p>“I was afraid of losing time being in the city center so I decided to be in another place but I cannot come walking to FEP, only by bus but buses are never on time. And cannot go out at night because have no transport to return home” (FG1.6)</p>
FG2	<p>“I live in the residence, is pretty cool, very good” (FG2.1)</p> <p>“I found an apartment to rent on facebook as FEP didn’t helped us” (FG2.4)</p> <p>“I live in the center, don’t need transport to walk by the city and the metro is near, it is really good” (FG2.4)</p> <p>“Had no help from FEP, I traveled to here one week before classes to find a place” (FG2.6)</p>

<p>FG3</p>	<p>“I was in Spru with a high price but then changed to an apartment near a metro station that is cheaper” (FG3.1)</p> <p>“First went to Spru but the experience was not good and changed to a room in a house with a friend” (FG3.2)</p> <p>“I went to a rent room but then changed a house, is more comfortable” (FG3.4)</p> <p>“I live in the residence of the university, the conditions are ok but they can improve and refurbish a little bit, change furniture, install oven...” (FG3.6)</p> <p>“I used to live in a students’ residence and moved to a private house downtown because it was cheaper and had more freedom” (FG3.7)</p>
<p>FG4</p>	<p>“I found in the internet advertising a place as the best place to live, but it was not, the room is very small and the lady was always complaining, so I changed to a better in the city center” (FG4.1)</p> <p>“The price for accommodation is very high.. stayed in my friends for 2 weeks and made some calls, and read in the newspaper, finding one in the internet, no help from FEP” (FG4.6)</p> <p>“In my country the residence is cheaper than the houses, but here in the city center you can rent a place for much less than a room in the residence, near the night parties and the metro is a plus” (FG4.7)</p>

Source: Author

Most of the students told that university did not helped them to arrange a place and in most of the cases, students found a place to rent in the internet or the place was recommended by someone. The price and relationship with location is, according to them, one of the items considered in the choice. Four from a group had been at the SPRU (University residence) but it was not a good experience and moved to an

apartment cheaper, near metro and with more freedom. In contrast, two are still living in student's residence and enjoy it. There was also a bad experience from a room which was considered in the internet "the best place to live" but it was a bad option. Price levels, types of accommodation and safety are mentioned in the literature as being functional and psychological aspects to have in account when forming the image of a city (Echtner & Ritchie, 2003).

### *Daily life*

About life in Portugal, most of Exchange students and confirming what we saw in literature review and is one the objectives of EP (Mhuire, 2012), tried to have social interaction, and participating in many activities. Most of the participants travelled around the country and visited some places like Lisbon, Coimbra, Aveiro, Valença, Braga, Guimarães, Sintra, Marco de Canaveses, Óbidos, Batalha, Vila Real, Régua, Viana do Castelo, Gerês, Faro and Peniche. Some of the non-European also traveled abroad (as it is a good opportunity, by the low cost flights and proximity to other European countries), visiting Barcelona, Paris, Amsterdam, Brussels, London, Santiago de Compostela or Madrid. Most of them made these trips with ESN (Erasmus Students Network) who organizes parties, thematic workshops, and trips for students. Also they traveled a lot in the district of Porto (Maia, Matosinhos, Gaia) and visited monuments as Torre dos Clérigos, Palácio da Bolsa, Serralves.

Time dedicated to discover a new culture, new way of life and act as active citizens (European Union, 2012) was a subject of the participants in focus groups, who apart from travelling and visiting monuments, also walked in the city, went to parks and gardens, to the beach, played football, went to concerts, tried surfing, bought a bicycle.. Other aspects as some directly related to people are expressed in some of the excerpts included in Table 9.

**Table 9 – Experience with day-to-day life of Exchange students in Porto**

Category	Experience with daily life
Climate	<p>“I did not like the climate, is always raining” (FG1.3)</p> <p>“Weather is very bad, it rains a lot” (FG2.1)</p>
Relationship with People	<p>“I tried to be always close to Portuguese people, do not like Erasmus life, as they are always drunk and in parties”; “I fell in love with a Portuguese guy”; “People are very relaxed, take it easy, for example if working four hours: 1 hour occurs in 1h30 with breaks for coffee” (FG1.5)</p> <p>“People are helpful, and sometimes they communicate also by gestures” (FG3.4)</p> <p>“People are like family, kind, warm” (FG4.4)</p> <p>“People are quite pleasant and always help if you need directions” (FG4.8)</p> <p>“It was difficult to find Portuguese youth to spoke to, but then found some and it was cool” (FG2.5)</p> <p>“..at first seemed that everyone spoke rudely outside the university buildings, and felt much impatience, especially among the older ones” (FG3.6)</p> <p>“Portuguese people help only if they want to” (FG4.2)</p> <p>“I was shocked because Portuguese people don’t like to work, they prefer celebrations” (FG4.8)</p>
Study	<p>“I did not travel as I was always studying, studying, studying” (FG3.1)</p> <p>“.. I studied a lot” (FG4.2)</p>
Others	<p>“I did social work once a week, helping in the distribution of food to homeless</p>



	<p>and it was a remarkable experience” (FG1.4)</p> <p>“I did not like that people could smoke at close places” (FG1.6)</p> <p>“I think Porto is the best city for doing Erasmus, every night there is an activity” (FG4.7)</p>
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Source: Author

For most of the students, people are helpful and kind. Being always near the Portuguese people, one student chose to act as an active citizenship (FG1.5). One student got a job to help with the expenses as he came from a poorer country (FG3.7). The bad thing of the experience in the city was, undoubtedly, the climate, as it rained a lot during their stay. Overall, Porto is a great choice to do the Exchange program.

*Story/Event*

After knowing the daily life, one of the questions was for participants to tell a remarkable story/event they had in order to understand what kind of activities they give importance to and also to know better their feelings about the city. Some of Exchange students’ experiences are shown in Table 10.

**Table 10 – Story/Events in the city remarkable for Exchange students**

Focus Group	Story / Event
FG1	<p>“S. João was very good but Queima it was nothing special, people were drunk”; I didn’t like some lack of civism, people at street don’t let the others pass” (FG1.1)</p> <p>“The city organizes many activities but it is always raining” (FG1.4)</p>

	<p>“S. João was crazy marvelous, fantastic”; “in Queima boys about 15 years old without bear and older man trying to approach from girls” (FG1.5)</p> <p>“S. João is a party for all with no distinction” (FG1.6)</p>
FG2	<p>“Had a curious story because of the constant rain, to take or not the umbrella when going out, I always didn’t, and always started raining when at the street (FG2.1)</p> <p>“I wanted to buy some cigarettes at the place I always did but one day did not had money and they did not give me the cigarettes, I thought it was racism, also because some people close the door when they see me, thinking I was going to steal them”; “I was shocked by seeing so few people in a funeral in the cemetery, so sad, that should not happen!”; I play football every Sunday with some friends” (FG2.2)</p> <p>“I liked the francesinhas” (FG2,3)</p> <p>“the parties at night and the francesinhas” (FG.2.5)</p>
FG3	<p>“I liked S. João, hit the others” (FG3.2)</p> <p>“I didn’t went to parties but went and liked S. João” (FG3.3)</p> <p>“S. João really enjoyed, it was so different” (FG3.4)</p> <p>“Overall great, I enjoyed my time here very much” (FG3.7)</p>
FG4	<p>“Enjoyed S. João (FG4.6)</p> <p>“In Queima I found many people drunk” (FG4.8)</p>

Source: Author

When asked to tell a story is easy to understand participants’ perceptions and evaluation of the quality of the destination, i.e., their satisfaction (Johnston & Clark, 2008). Most participants thought that S. João was undoubtedly a remarkable experience although it was not mentioned in one group (FG2), and by opposite the Queima, was a deception with “many students drunk” (FG4.8; FG1.1).

In one of the groups (FG2), there was no event to talk but mentioned the experience of eating the “francesinhas” (“spicy” (FG2.6), “oh, my stomach” (FG2.1)) and the bad weather.

### *Satisfaction and recommendation*

The findings on the 27 participants’ feelings and opinions suggest that they are all satisfied with their experience in Porto. Citing Flucker & Turner (2000), and having in mind that motivation and an existing experience lead the human being towards satisfaction, living a good experience is important to recommend the city of Porto, like in this case where all the students would recommend.

Finally, and using a projective technique, it was asked students to describe Porto in a word and in a color. Some of the words/colors are presented in Table 11.

**Table 11 - Words and colors to describe the city of Porto**

Word	Color
Porto football team (FG1.3; FG4.5)	Orange (FG1.1; FG2.1)
S.João and Tradition (FG1.6)	Green (FG1.2; FG3.2; FG3.6)
Life (FG1.4)	Blue (FG1.3; FG1.4; FG2.5; FG3.1; FG4.4; FG4.5)
Sports, Music (FG1.3)	Grey (FG1.5; FG1.6; FG3.7)
Kindness (FG3.2)	Colored (FG3.5)
Sky (FG3.1)	White (FG4.2)
Wave (ocean) (FG3.6)	Purple (FG3.4)
Opportunity (FG3.5)	Blue and white (FG4.3)
Culture (FG2.5)	
Diversity (FG2.4)	
Old (FG1.5)	

Cute (FG1.2)	
Lovely (FG3.4)	
Simple and Cold (FG3.3)	
Quiet (FG4.1)	
Stable (FG4.3)	
Serene (FG4.4)	
Incredible (FG2.6; FG4.6)	
Memorable (FG3.7)	
Awesome (FG4.7)	

Source: Author

As studied in literature (Dibb et al., 2006), the projective technique is very interesting as it permits to find some feelings and beliefs about a subject. In this association, participants were divided on this issue, but the most mentioned word was “incredible”, followed by “football team”. In general, words with a positive meaning (“memorable”, “incredible”, “lovely”, “awesome”) and also with a sense of calm (“serene”, “stable”, “quiet”) were mentioned. One of the participants described the city as “it is an old, decadent but elegant city” and reinforced “the beauty of Porto is in its decadence, you can feel the meaning of *saudade* in Porto” (FG1.5). Before triggering the debate and as an icebreaker, the same question was asked. The results, however, as presented in Annex 3, were slightly different. The word “river” was mentioned in the four groups but curiously was not mentioned at this time, as well as words like “the people”; the “ocean” and “city”, which revealed positive meanings. “Climate” mentioned in the first moment can be understood as a neutral word, and no one revealed negative perceptions of the city.

Geographical characteristics of Porto and the city ambience are, in fact, crucial to student involvement. As reviewed in literature (Choi & Sirakaya, 2001; Son & Pearce, 2005), some valued elements of the experience are equally mentioned in the two different parts of the discussion, which can be more functional and tangible like

“infrastructures”, “sports” or more emotional like the praising words “marvelous”, “kindness”, “lovely” which are projected in the destination image through beliefs, perceptions, feelings and multi-sensory representation, and may differ from individual to individual. Although the words were not the same in the two moments, maybe because of the discussion had meanwhile and its influence, all participants seemed to have and reflect good feelings about Porto.

About the colors, following the idea of Dibb (2006) perceptions of colors are not very different between cultures. In the case of the participants in focus groups, blue was the most present, because of the “sky”, “the ocean”, “the beach”; then the color green “because of the nature all over the city and the ocean” (FG3.6); and grey because of the “constant rain”(FG3.7), and “because not of sad but as it is the color of most construction in the city (Aliados, FEP)” (FG1.6); Color orange because of the sun when hits the buildings” (FG1.1). Besides grey, bright and light colors were mentioned reinforcing the serene, memorable and quietness of the city.

### 4.3 About FEP

This section about FEP focus on the motivations and expectations about the school, the reception, life in FEP, facilities, aspects to be improved and level of satisfaction.

#### *Motivations and Expectations*

Regarding the motivations and expectations students had when coming to FEP, some of the most mentioned are in Table 12.

**Table 12 – Motivations and Expectations of Exchange students about FEP**

Focus Group	Motivations and Expectations
FG1	<p>“I expected more hospitality and help from Portuguese” (FG1.1)</p> <p>“I think people choose to study here because of its [FEP] reputation” (FG1.4)</p> <p>“I had high expectations about the master because had read the program in the internet and thought it would be very interesting, expected more, the way the teachers explain without many details” (FG1.5)</p> <p>“Expecting another building as I saw an orange one in the internet” (FG1.3)</p>
FG2	<p>“It is very different from what I expected: thought it would have a dynamic session for Erasmus presentation and a rally by the university to get to know how it is organized, where are the rooms” (FG2.1)</p> <p>“Expected it would be quite easy to do the exams and would not have to study a lot” (FG2.3)</p>
FG3	<p>“I thought it would be like in my country, but it is more difficult” (FG3.3)</p> <p>“People told me Erasmus would be easier and simple but no, system is totally different, very difficult” (FG3.4)</p> <p>“..had high expectations of the faculty as I had previously discovered it ranked as the best in Portugal” (FG3.7)</p>
FG4	<p>“I saw the rankings and then the university was extremely disappointing for me” (FG4.4)</p> <p>“Thought it was bigger, ... disappointing” (FG4.5)</p>

Source: Author

No doubt, according to Maslow (1954) the fulfillment of a need satisfies the individual and the non fulfilling makes people uncomfortable. So the students’ motivations and expectations came up during the focus group and we register that some students mentioned their expectation as pulled motives or attributes, a good hospitality and more help from Portuguese people and especially Portuguese colleagues. Educational opportunities and availability of the program, as well as the fact people study in FEP by its reputation (Mazzarol & Soutar, 2001; 2002) were push factors mentioned.

Many of them already had a mental image of FEP as they have seen some photos in the internet and expected a bigger and better building, with more color and joy. Four of the students thought they would not have to study much; it would be simple and the system similar to their realities. The general opinion is that they had higher expectations and the arrival at FEP was a bit disappointing.

**Reception**

Regarding reception of students in FEP, some felt some difficult in picking them at the airport or e-mails not answered, as seen in Table 13.

**Table 13 - Reception of Exchange students in FEP**

Focus Group	Reception
FG1	“the meeting at the Reitoria and the explanation there about the city was very good ... and Prof. Ana Paula Africano was very nice to us” (FG1.2)  “..no one went to pick me up at the airport” (FG1.3)
FG2	“they told us oh, you’re welcome, the best for you, this is the welcome session and it’s all ... we had a session in Portuguese and it was difficult to understand” (FG2.1)

	<p>“U.Porto is accustomed to receive foreign students and all the situations had already occurred which facilitates the reception of new students here” (FG2.4)</p>
FG3	<p>“the reception and process of integration was ok and I enjoyed it” (FG3.6)</p> <p>“I just needed some help with directions around the town, but the problem was solved after they handed us maps on the greeting ceremony at FEP ... FEP had appointed me two buddies but we had a problem in communication, so we only found each other the next day, after my arrival” (FG3.7)</p>
FG4	<p>“Initially it was a bit struggle, I felt like an outsider, alone, that everybody hated me” (FG4.1)</p> <p>“People speak very fast ... the sub-director is always helpful” (FG4.2)</p> <p>“I had tutors but had problems communicating with them” (FG4.5)</p> <p>“Before I came here, I sent an e-mail telling who I am, bla-bla-bla, my student number, date and time of arrival, ... but, no answer at all! ... I would say there were 3 categories of people: very helpful, not helpful and normal” (FG4.6)</p>

Source: Author

FEP has a kind of buddies to help in the reception but do not work very well. For people from Mexico and Chile it was difficult to understand the Portuguese session where they were integrated. People speak fast and it is difficult when not speaking Portuguese nor good English. Also concerning the reception, and as viewed in the literature that U.Porto (2013b) organizes a welcome session, the ones from non-European countries talked about it. European students also mentioned the meeting at Reitoria as being a plus and the importance of the greeting ceremony at FEP. Most of students mentioned the sub-director of FEP as being a helpful person and some looked for her when needed.



## Experience – Life in FEP

The analysis of life in FEP is divided in classes, teachers, integration with other students, communication with mobility department and FEP and other groups.

### *Classes*

About this subject the students are a little divided. In Table 14 we find some citations of Exchange students experience towards classes in FEP.

**Table 14 – Opinions about Classes in FEP**

<b>Focus Group</b>	<b>Positive perceptions</b>
FG1	<p>“For me the classes are very similar to my country, but with more homework ... it was my first time having a class in English” (FG1.4)</p> <p>“I studied and continue studying, I'm a nerd, not an Erasmus, but a university student of FEP” (FG1.5)</p>
FG2	“I understood well the classes” (FG2.3)
FG3	<p>“Second semester was better” (FG3.4)</p> <p>“quite difficult for me in the first semester but now is better, a lot to study” (FG3.5)</p> <p>“... in the second one [semester] I was allowed to choose everything that I really wanted, that freedom is very hard to find in a university” (FG3.7)</p>
FG4	“thank God we have classes in the post-graduate one” (FG4.6)
	<b>Negative Perceptions</b>
FG1	“there is a gap between what you do in classes and in exams” (FG1.1)

	<p>“I came to Portugal because the facility of language and then had classes in English, bibliography and other material in English and, to go the English classes to learn, could not attend the classes of my course, it was very difficult for me” (FG1.3)</p> <p>“... the exam was the most difficult” (FG1.4)</p> <p>“It was strange to attend in English, difficult to concentrate with classes at night... some of my classes did not started, the schedule was not right, had serious problems with the organization; exams are too close, it is impossible to organize like that, why you put days like 17,18, 20?... just passed because exams were similar but failed one ... give at least 2 days; I studied and continue studying” (FG1.5)</p> <p>“The date of exams is too close to each other and some exams where teachers discount points with wrong answers are impossible! ... in classes is 1+1=2 but in exams is 1 square root of... divided by... and the grades are very low compared to what I had” (FG1.6)</p>
<p>FG2</p>	<p>“...only one teacher was at time” (FG2.3)</p> <p>“There were too many students in classes” (FG2.4)</p> <p>“I don’t understand how teachers allowed students to enter and exit during classes; some students were on the phone...” (FG2.6)</p> <p>“Both teachers and students were always late to classes...(only one was at time); too much movement in classes, people always coming in and out” (FG2.3)</p>
<p>FG3</p>	<p>“quite difficult for me in the first semester ... a lot to study” (FG3.5)</p> <p>“Most of classes were boring; I was during a class when I had to leave the class 2 or 3 times. The teacher was very angry in the end even though I explained the situation clearly and apologized for the inconvenience. He said that only if someone from my family died I should have left the class, which I think was overreacted and made me feel so bad” (FG3.6)</p>

	<p>“First semester was rather boring as I had already studied all the subjects in my bachelor ...” (FG3.7)</p>
FG4	<p>“First semester was very hard... Sunday to Sunday I was here studying, works... had to talk with Paula Africano and ask for help” (FG4.2)</p> <p>“Had a problem with one class with 70 students from different masters, lots of accounts, extremely complicated ... talked with the director and he said ‘don’t worry’ and the teacher ‘work hard’ ... in the end had 14 and it was the worst grade of my life although it was curious the average was 12”; “the course is very theoretical ” (FG4.4)</p> <p>“thank God we don’t have classes in this building (just one or two and it was really freezing)... the chairs are so closed to each other and the legs don’t fit I can't sit heeeeeeee! For god's sake, we are in 21st century” (FG4.6)</p> <p>“About the classes, not so good, if I had problems with my grades it was my fault because it was my 1st time, different ways of teaching... we had hundreds of pages of books to read; the 1st semester had very theoretical subjects” (FG4.8)</p>

Source: Author

For most students, both from Mobility and Degree, originated from various countries, the main difficulties they felt were with adaptation to subjects, too much group works and programs were considered as having an excessive difficulty, with much theory. Students of Mobility, especially from non-European countries, felt the English language also presented in bibliography, very difficult to understand. For students doing a complete year in FEP, the second semester was easier as the first semester was “boring”. The dates of exams were too close to each other and some exams where teachers reduce points were also the most mentioned problems. Three referred the continuous in and out of the classes, people speaking at the mobile phone during classes, lack of punctuality and too many students in a class. As positive remarks, it is referred the fact of facility to choose the programs, the post-graduation building and the fact that classes in second semester are more interesting than in the first one.

Reminding the literature (Dibb et al., 2006) and what was said about the process in marketing of services, these opinions of students over classes are influenced by the way service is processed. There is a clear difficulty in the relation between teacher and student, too distant. One insisted that “is better to do only two exams in FEP and the others in their own country, to have a good average, because having more credits here, the average will go down” (FG1.5).

*Teachers*

Students are a little divided about the teachers, as reflected in Table 15.

**Table 15 – Opinions about Teachers in FEP**

Focus Group	Positive perceptions
FG1	<p>“... prefer the management teachers instead of economics” (FG1.2)</p> <p>“first one teacher had classes in English but I talked to him as I didn’t understand and then the teacher changed giving the classes in English half an hour before the class and then giving the class in Portuguese ... some works I had to do in Portuguese and then colleagues translate ... some teachers were careful with me, asking if I was understanding what they were saying” (FG1.3)</p> <p>“It was ok, teachers tried to help and find another date for exam when one of the students could not do it in the given day...” (FG1.5)</p>
FG2	<p>“They always helped when needed, and one of the teachers translated the exam for Spanish students” (FG2.3)</p> <p>“Some are good, others aren’t... (FG2.5)</p>
FG3	<p>“Teachers are good, very good” (FG3.1)</p>

	<p>“All the teachers were nice and spoke English, no remarks here...” (FG3.7)</p>
FG4	<p>“there was one very teacher that passed away ... but you can always negotiate even in the deadline” (FG4.5)</p> <p>“They speak English very well, especially Profs. X and Y” (FG4.6)</p> <p>“I liked the professors mostly; some of them are really good and come from big companies like strategic professors: One of them from Sonae; Teacher K I liked her too much. She brought a bottle of wine to class and interacts with us, giving examples of real life” (FG4.7)</p>
<b>Focus Group</b>	<b>Negative perceptions</b>
FG1	<p>“the teachers should speak better in English ... they gave many works to do” (FG1.1)</p> <p>“difficult relationship between teachers and students, there is no communication, there are no questions ... such an internationalized university and so cold” (FG1.2)</p> <p>“... teachers cannot give more than 17, but there is a scale until 20, is only for God? Never saw this!” (FG1.5)</p>
FG2	<p>“it’s strange, teachers only want us to write in exams what they say in classes, there is no discussion or different points of view... what professor puts in blackboard or it is in the .pdf is the true and only the true” (FG2.1)</p> <p>“there should be more dialogue between teachers and students; questions in exams were very different from what we learned at classes; we made works and then the teacher did not had that in account for the final note, this does not give any motivation to do more” (FG2.2)</p> <p>“... although one teacher did not let me attend a Portuguese class because being Erasmus should attend lessons in English” (FG2.3)</p>

	“Some are good, others aren’t... many teachers spoke long time but about other themes (FG2.5)
FG3	“... study is too difficult and the English of teachers” (FG3.1)  “... Only one [remark] actually, they do not have the tendency to give grades higher than 16 to regular students. I noticed they tend to boost the international classes’ grades (for a better impression, I guess), but when I had classes with a regular master program, in Portuguese, everything was completely different” (FG3.7)
FG4	“They speak very fast” (FG4.2)  “English was not easy... difficult integration with teachers” (FG4.5)

Source: Author

About teachers, opinions are divided, with the students from degree being more satisfied with teachers, saying they speak very well English and are nice, although there is a tendency from teachers to give low grades. Mundus Students from Mobility think the teachers should give more examples and be more detailed when explaining the subjects, and let reflection and different points of view happen. Another claim was that teachers should speak more slowly; one of the students had a different experience “had a problem as my professor only speaks, only blablabla, you can't write, and I used the record but then I could not do that all the semester and all days is impossible” (FG2.1).

Many of them also spoke about the people who work in FEP as being kind and helpful.

About classes and teachers and regarding what was presented in literature (Dibb et al., 2006), a service provider like FEP has a continuous interaction between the student and the personnel of the faculty, in this case teachers and other staff. The good management of the personnel by, for example, giving them training and motivation will help to overcome some of the negative issues mentioned by the participants.

*Integration with other students*

At a first glance, the interaction with other students of the same faculty seemed to be slow, and the feeling of being a stranger often prevailed over the feeling of being a foreigner, that is to say, a student from another country. In Table 16 we can find some of the Exchange students’ opinions about their integration with Portuguese students.

**Table 16 – Integration with other students**

Focus Group	Integration
FG1	<p>“It was ok with some students but not so good in general, I felt some indifference for being Erasmus students” (FG1.1)</p> <p>“Some Portuguese students were too cold, but the relation improved over time” (FG1.3)</p> <p>“I passed 90% of my time with international students as Portuguese are too closed” (FG1.4)</p> <p>“The experience wasn’t good, they are direct in speaking and not gentle and some looked sideways; only made two friends, a girl and a boy” (FG1.6)</p>
FG2	<p>“Portuguese are very closed in their circles; if you are international student you are very drunker” (FG2.1)</p> <p>“It was difficult to adapt, no one spoke to me and there is no interaction with teachers” (FG2.2)</p> <p>“..good integration with some students but only in FEP” (FG2.4)</p> <p>“I didn’t went to many classes as I had some problems in relationship with Portuguese colleagues, so I worked by myself, alone, at home” (FG2.5)</p>
FG3	<p>“It was ok with Portuguese people but essentially I was with international students”</p>

	<p>(FG3.1)</p> <p>“Portuguese students aren’t with us and don’t help... they are not open and not all of them say ‘Hi’” (FG3.2)</p> <p>“I don’t know Portuguese students, couldn’t integrate, was with international ones, known at ESN” (FG3.4)</p> <p>“There was no problem with the classmates because they are very helpful, I feel lucky, went to families in Christmas... study with them for exams... combined to go to beach after exams” (FG3.5)</p> <p>“...with students I created some friendships” (FG3.6)</p> <p>“The Portuguese students I met were nice” (FG3.7)</p>
<p>FG4</p>	<p>“They are very close and do not let us to approach” (FG4.5)</p> <p>“I really expected more from them [Portuguese colleagues]” (FG4.6)</p> <p>“It’s not difficult, in our classes the Portuguese are a minority and it was also easy to find international students at ESN” (FG4.7)</p> <p>“They helped, speak with us and explain” (FG4.8)</p>

Source: Author

A considerable number felt that, in some cases the students weren't warm enough with one another. The Portuguese students were more reserved, with a difficult approach and almost none dialogue in the classes. These circumstances could lead the students to avoid classes and work at home, alone (like what happened with one of the students) but, in general, it enabled Exchange people to socialize better with one another and spend more time together. Therefore, not many acquaintances were established in this period, although some individual relationships were developed and some close friendships started to grow during this time. Nevertheless, this initial difficulty of



integration seemed to be fading out as time went by. Mobility students had more difficult to feel close to other colleagues, only two from European countries managed to get help from Portuguese students. Degree students say they met some nice and helpful Portuguese students but essentially they contacted with international students. The several events, organized by ESN or other people, helped the contact with international students, together with the fact that, in some classes, the Portuguese students are minority.

The other students and colleagues are also considered a part of the service delivery, directly or indirectly close to the quality of the service (Dibb et al., 2006). As so, the general opinion is that it is easier to communicate with non Portuguese students than with the Portuguese ones.

***Mobility Department***

When talking about this issue, one of the main responsible of this department (FM) was considered by almost everyone as a nice, charming and helpful person, always available for every explanation or help. Nevertheless, and despite her care, she often had to ask people to try other person or office, as there were some problems that she didn't know how to solve. The other two people from the staff that interact with these students were also considered very helpful.

Some of the most mentioned phrases about the Mobility department are in Table 17.

**Table 17 – Exchange students experience with the mobility department**

Focus Group	Mobility department
FG1	“FM is a very nice, kind and available to help and to clarify, I have no complaints”

	<p>(FG1.1)</p> <p>“FM is helpful, incredible and I don’t have complaints from the faculty staff”</p> <p>(FG1.2)</p> <p>“Erasmus office very helpful, work in a good way, everyone is kind and fell in love with FM” (FG1.5)</p> <p>“They are all nice and better than in my faculty, they want to pass a good image to the foreigners” (FG1.6)</p>
FG2	<p>“There they helped me and spoke with the teacher that didn’t want to let me assist the Portuguese classes” (FG2.3)</p> <p>“If I needed help, I knew they were there to help” (FG2.1)</p>
FG3	<p>“They are very helpful” (FG3.2)</p> <p>“They helped me a lot, essentially FM” (FG3.4)</p> <p>“A big problem is they don’t reply to e-mails, I was interested in a new program but didn’t receive any assistance on that via e-mail and didn’t have time to go to FEP by myself... other than that my impressions from the administration are good... they speak English and are very helpful” (FG3.7)</p>
FG4	<p>“FM wanted to help but she was new at that place and didn’t know to solve the problem, and I went to every departments and for a small thing it was complicated” (FG4.2)</p> <p>“...after first month people were very helpful and trying to help but they couldn’t with my problem” (FG4.4)</p> <p>“I send my initial proposal and received an e-mail saying the research proposal was accused. I felt bad; thought had done something very bad and would be arrested as it has a scary meaning in English” (FG4.6)</p> <p>“They are nice, brought us from the airport and answer e-mails if not in that day, in the day after” (FG4.8)</p>

Source: Author

Following the idea of Dibb (2006) that the way in which the service is processed becomes part of the experience, this department seems to be a good service provider, being helpful and effective in solving students' problems, e.g., when someone had to change his timetable whenever overlapping classes occurred or needed some information about the courses, transport from the airport to town or receive directions during the first days to get urgent contacts. A good example, that becomes remarkable for the student experience, as studied in the literature (Booms & Bitner, 1981; Dibb et al., 2006), is a good flow of information and friendliness of staff which help to satisfaction of the service, as it was the case when the mobility department solved a quarrel between a student and a teacher who was preventing her from going to his class, because he did not know that Portuguese-spoken classes could also be attended by Exchange students. This attitude of one teacher may be a result from the lack of information or communication between the faculty and teachers. A good quality of the service delivery is essential.

All Mundus students from Mobility praised the department, as a result of their satisfaction with the service being offered and resulting in a positive word of mouth (Bearden & Teel, 1983). In spite of that, there were some complaints about this office, especially with Mundus Degree students. One, curiously, is related with the absence of email replies or other assistance, forcing people to go personally to the faculty when they need something from it (the newly compiled ERASMUS+ program), which may not be suitable for someone who lives far away or works during the day. Another is concerned with the lack of assistance in the airport, after the arrival, leaving people alone there, with no help, unless one has acquaintances in the city that can pick him up.

The mistakes in English writing and the late answers to emails were also remarked as a negative feature of this department, despite the helpful people met in the International Office.

*FEP and other Groups*

The students that talked about this kind of experience mentioned ESN “almost mandatory, we all make part of it” (FG4.7), although, four students of the FG2 did not participate in any group. Most students referred it was from ESN that they had easy access to the various activities and events, such as the ones in Table 18.

**Table 18 - Participation in ESN and FEP events**

<i>Positive remarks</i>
Football game in the stadium (FG1.2)
Parties (FG4.6)
Portuguese dinner (FG3.4)
International meals (FG1.3)
Magusto (FG3.5)
“Programme frontiers” - Lectures in primary and middle schools, teaching their culture
“Finance Club” (FG3.5; FG4.7)
“Management Club” - with trips to Lisbon or Madrid, e.g. London, next year (FG4.7; FG4.8)
<i>Negative remarks</i>
Unpleasant smoking environment (FG1.2; FG1.6)
Shocking behaviors (FG1.3)

Source: Author

The FG3.6, about ESN activities, focused “most of activities about the city and country were made with ESN, although they are unorganized but they have cheap prices and they always want to get drunk”.

In the Maslow’s pyramid (Maslow, 1954) we studied that belonging and being member of a group is one the individual’s needs which is likewise mentioned and students refer ESN as almost mandatory, even if there are more negative remarks, as places with much smoking or behaviors not approved by some of the students, like getting drunk.

About learning Portuguese, one student took a Portuguese course in a language school

Course with “A1” certificate, for free, with good teachers and transport paid by SEF, planning to do “A2” certificate in July (FG4.6). Another student received an “A1.1” certificate, improved her language skills, with the contact with her Portuguese friends, by speaking, reading, listening and finding the meanings. Others just refer that they know “some words.”

### *Facilities*

The building, library and IT services will be analyzed in this subtopic.

#### *a) Building*

The FEP building does not leave good memories for anyone. Many reasons contribute for this general feeling, like these in Table 19.

**Table 19 - Feelings about the FEP building**

Focus Group	Building
FG1	<p>“No color, looks like a military building” (FG1.3)</p> <p>“grey, even with the windows open...” (FG1.5)</p> <p>“Seems to have no improvements since its opening” (FG1.1)</p> <p>“Please paint it!” (FG1.5)</p>
FG2	<p>“Shocking” (FG2.6)</p>
FG3	<p>“Tiny furniture, being difficult to accommodate the working tools and the students' legs” (FG3.3)</p>
FG4	<p>“Looks like a big garage” (FG4.7)</p> <p>“I saw the building inside and was so depressed... No heating, very cold, with the excuse that it would be fixed the following summer, so as not to disturb the students...; old-fashioned (blackboards with white chalk no markers)” (FG4.6)</p>

Source: Author

Regarding FEP building, the literature (Booms & Bitner, 1981; Dibb et al., 2006) can be mentioned using the physical evidence of service delivery which refers to the appearance and environment in which the service is offered and tangible aspects that help in the communication of the service. It refers to the feel of the service, having here a significant relevance when comparing to the shocking image and bad appearance students have of FEP building. Naturally, the overall feeling about the building makes it not very attractive for the students to remain there a great deal of time, apart from their classes, and even these. Obviously the subjects matter as an inappropriate physical evidence can ruin the experience. At least, “the new building is more beautiful and modern” (FG4.8).

In FG1, the service of the **Canteen** was referred as “really bad, you cannot serve that” (FG1.5); “food seemed to be the remains of the day before (by nearly the same price, one can eat better in the bar near the English classrooms, at the orange building)” (FG1.1); “few variety of meals (especially for those who don't like pork or fish)” (FG1.6). The literature mentioned referred back to the concern to people and some considered poor attitudes, like low-quality meals or inefficient service.

*b) Library*

The general opinion about FEP library is that it works well, as seen in Table 20.

**Table 20 - Feelings about the FEP Library**

Focus Group	Library
FG1	<p>“Good organization” (FG1.2)</p> <p>“Easy and well-running book requests” (FG1.1)</p> <p>“Good storage for the complete student's life and other facilities” (FG1.3)</p>
FG2	<p>“it is good” (FG2.2)</p>
FG3	<p>“Good space and staff” (FG3.5)</p> <p>“Provides the students with almost every documentation or articles they need” (FG3.6)</p> <p>“One thing I hated is that if anybody makes a reservation of a book you currently have, you have a deadline of 3 days to return it, and otherwise you pay fees. I found it absurd” (FG3.7)</p>
FG4	<p>“Downloadable materials for free and good staff” (FG4.7)</p> <p>“Good access to computers and electronic resources If the library doesn't have a book they manage to make it available quick and easily” (FG4.6)</p>

Source: Author

Discussing about Library, literature (Dibb et al., 2006) already concerned some aspects of physical evidence and people, described here as the ambience of the library, the seating areas, the availability of resources, well organized and of easy access, the computers room and the competence and good people who work there, all good qualities of the service delivery. Process is also focused on library having some operational issues: a prompt service, easy to use and simple information rules.

*c) IT Services*

From IT Services of FEP, Exchange students have good memories and many reasons contribute for this general feeling, like these in Table 21.

**Table 21 - Feelings about FEP IT services**

Focus Group	IT Services
FG1	“It functions well” (FG1.4)
FG2	“It was ok” (FG2.2)
FG3	<p>“P., from the data stream was very helpful, usually meet her when I need help” (FG3.5)</p> <p>“Very helpful staff, free wireless access to the internet in the building, even if not so inside the rooms” (FG3.7)</p>
FG4	<p>“very good qualities of these services” (FG4.1)</p> <p>“The Eduram system I can use it in Reitoria and faculty of science but it does not work here, went several times to the IT services and at the end doesn’t work, I don’t know why but then give up but they should know why my laptop doesn’t connect here because it works in other faculties” (FG4.5)</p>

Source: Author



About IT Services, there was a generally good opinion, especially because students had an explanation before the classes begin about Sigarra, although some of them still find it difficult to work. Only one student did not felt satisfied. Other physical evidences that provide comfortable feelings as the machines with rules/menus in English, the free Wi-Fi in the building (although rarely works at rooms) and the system for copy/printing were mentioned by more than one as being very good.

***Improvement suggestions:***

After the experience lived in FEP, some of the mentioned improvements suggested by participants are presented in Table 22.

**Table 22 - Exchange students improvement suggestions**

Focus Group	Improvement suggestions
FG1	<p>“classes should have maximum 20 people because it is too hot and very difficult to concentrate with so many students and many are doing other things than listening to teacher” (FG1.4)</p> <p>“The organization of classes”; “to do more practical exercises at classes”; “paint the walls” (FG1.5)</p> <p>“the relation between teacher and student” (FG1.2)</p> <p>“the level of English spoken by teachers” (FG1.1)</p> <p>“Teachers have to answer our e-mails” (FG1.3)</p> <p>“The dates of the exams, would be good not to have exam for the day after S. João, as everyone goes out”; don’t do exams in which wrong answers are discounted” (FG1.6)</p>

<p>FG2</p>	<p>“more places to study because it is very stressful to study in the corridors” (FG2.1)</p> <p>“to have a dinner at the end of the semester” (FG2.2)</p> <p>“the problem with the dates of exams, having only one week between the normal and recourse time, and teachers do not give grades at time and we don’t know when to return to our countries”; “Classes with few students” (FG2.3)</p> <p>“Teachers should pay more attention to students and facilitate integration” (FG2.5)</p>
<p>FG3</p>	<p>“the canteen is too expensive” (FG3.4; FG3.5)</p> <p>“the facilities, these chairs (in auditoriums) if I want to go to toilet is impossible” (FG3.5)</p> <p>“To have less information during classes, as the amount of information is too much for only one semester” (FG3.6)</p> <p>“definitely the heating system has to be a priority”; “Some social benefits for foreigners, that would be very good” (FG3.7)</p>
<p>FG4</p>	<p>“Problems of interaction specially with Portuguese students” (FG4.1)</p> <p>“When occurring the reception session, I suggest to have some attention for students that do not speak Portuguese nor English”; “It would be good to have a group to help in the first month”; “to be faster in answering e-mails” (FG4.2)</p> <p>“would like to see improved the quality of the computers” (FG4.3)</p> <p>“in the weekends instead of only opening the door every hour, there should be a card to open it”; “people should know more English” (FG4.5)</p> <p>“a lot of things: materials, computers... we don’t have to go to other faculties far from here, it is just cross the street and go to FEUP where one can see the difference, such a big library, very good design, it is a totally different architecture between</p>

<p>these two faculties” (FG4.6)</p> <p>“I would prefer to make an internship instead of writing a thesis and people here say there are opportunities for international students but then the advertisements are in Portuguese” (FG4.7)</p> <p>“Exams are difficult, in my country teachers give us for example 50 questions to study and you should know everything about it” (FG4.8)</p>
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Source: Author

About accommodation, many felt alone and think it would be helpful if FEP made some list of places already approved, where Exchange students could stay, near or far from the university, telling where the metro stops, and saying the advantages and disadvantages of each of them. People or students from FEP or students could be available to help the new students in this search, turning it easier especially for non-Portuguese speakers.

In all of the groups they referred that walls should be painted with other colors than grey (suggesting yellow, white, orange), and the heating fixed.

Others suggested that the faculty should promote the association between teachers and students, and also between Portuguese students and foreigners as the former don't maintain a good relation and do not interact. Other thing that they wished to be improved is the time of response from the teachers and from the faculty but also, to have more exercises and the knowing of the structure of the exams during the classes, as well as higher grades for all. Concerning the exams, the calendar should be better organized so as students could have more time to study.

Two participants also referred as a plus the possibility to work in some companies and to make some kind of internships during their staying in Porto.

### *Satisfaction and recommendation*

After the experience of students, an evaluation of FEP service and a comparison with their initial expectations are required. The opinions of students from different countries and programs are not too different. The 27 students are satisfied and one of them mentioned “My expectations were too much high and still reality is almost the same” (FG4.7).

As satisfaction maybe affective it influences the loyalty and is linked to word of mouth and recommendation (Bearden & Teel, 1983). As so, when asked if they recommend FEP, the opinions diverge as they first say things like: “it is too intense” (FG4.5); “very difficult, people have to prepare and organize themselves very well” (FG4.1); “really tough” (FG3.5); “requires much study and works” (FG1.4); “one cannot relax, has to suffer a lot” (FG2.4); “I would know which subjects to recommend” (FG2.6); “I already recommended it once, but now I don’t know...” (FG2.3). Thereafter students’ recommendations balance between yes (16) and not so easy to recommend (11). This situation confirms what is referred in the literature (Baloglu & McCleary, 1999) that the recommendation only happens when people have a good living experience, and in this case not all students had a good experience with FEP.

When asked if they were able to be ambassadors of FEP in their own countries, their opinion, after some discussion, was that ambassadors are people who love the experience, who have success, who feel part of, who know a lot of things about the place, and as they did not feel anything of these about FEP, they would not accept a commitment like that.

Finishing the part of FEP, projective techniques were used for students to describe FEP in a word and in a color. Some of the words/colors are presented in Table 23.

**Table 23 - Words and colors to describe FEP**

Word	Color
Very demanding (FG2.2)	Dark grey (FG1.1; FG3.6)
Rigorous (FG1.3)	Grey (FG1.2; FG1.3; FG1.5; FG2.1; FG2.2; FG2.5; FG3.5; FG4.5; FG4.6; FG4.7)
Hard (FG2.1; FG3.5)	Red (FG1.4; FG1.6; FG4.1)
Too heavy (FG1.4)	Green (FG4.2)
Stress (FG2.3)	Purple (FG4.3)
Study, study (FG4.6)	Red and white (FG4.8)
For Intellectuals (FG3.2)	Blue (FG3.1)
Intelligence (FG3.1; FG3.3)	White (FG3.3)
Push (FG3.4)	Yellow (FG3.4)
Professional (FG3.7)	Brown (FG3.7)
Different (FG1.2)	
Finance (FG4.7)	
Organized (FG1.6)	
Good company (FG1.5)	
Good (FG4.8)	
Cold (FG3.6)	

Source: Author

As already seen in the literature chapter, projective techniques (Malhotra, 2004) help to understand and define some feelings that people have about a subject. In this case, participants confirming what was said about FEP, were not too divided on this issue, being the most mentioned word “hard”, followed by similar words like “demanding” and “push”. Meanwhile more positive words like “good” was mentioned by two and also words which put FEP in a high level as “intellectuals”, or “intelligence”.

About the colors, grey is the most present, because of the “color of the building outside, inside and even the chairs”, or “crying a lot, too heavy”; and “old”. Defending the idea of Dibb (2006) the use of colors helps to understand attitudes or feelings. In the case of FEP, chosen colors by most of students have a negative meaning, are darker and sad reflecting a hard and old faculty. The color red, although it is a strong color, was mentioned as being the color “of the faculty”; “in the website”, which can be considered as having a neutral connotation in this case.

After all the discussion and to conclude the focus group, a little present was given to each in appreciation and it was asked if there was anything more to say.

Most of the students mentioned that they are happy for having the opportunity of the Exchange, that it was good to “grow up” and for “personal development”, “it was a mix of cultures which made me to be more open to accept the differences and other ideas, opinions” (FG4.6), gave “more self-confidence”, “learned how to manage my budget, my problems and my life alone” (FG3.6), and all of participants consider this experience will be good for future, to get a job because all of them “learned a lot”.

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## CHAPTER 5 – CONCLUSIONS AND LIMITATIONS

### 5.1 Conclusions

The obtained results confirm Exchange students' analysis importance so that many of their expectations could be met and relation improved. As mentioned in the literature, it is important for a city to know why it is a destination choice and for a university to understand what motivates students to study abroad and to select a particular program.

From the analysis of the focus groups, the results do not confirm the literature when considering to study in a new country a voluntary option, but a “must to do an Erasmus”. Nevertheless, results confirm the literature in what relates to the motivations and reasons of students to study abroad: a set of push and pull motives as desire to travel, educational opportunities, geographical proximity, curiosity about understanding a new culture and experience a new way of life. Referring to the sequence of choice, the first thing to choose is really to study abroad and then the country and faculty, but there are exceptions, being for example the course the most important for some of the participants.

Regarding the city of Porto in what concerns motivations and expectations results confirm the literature as students have different types of expectations which vary from person to person. In many aspects Porto meets students' expectations and is one of the

Exchange students' choices, as they can find a good hospitality and facility of languages spoken. Porto is considered a smaller city than they expected but easy to go abroad, has many events, academic and night life, low cost flights, nice landscapes, beach, river, sports and in addition an interesting cultural and gastronomic offer which thereby respond to the needs and motivations mentioned in literature. During the focus groups, students made clear their positive image of the city and did not pointed out negative issues about the city except for the bad weather.

The experience in the city was good. Students prefer to live in the city center and, as the literature referred act as citizenships, integrating the city life, knowing the culture, travelling, visiting places, tasting the typical food, and going to concerts and parties. Even though, some students did not had the opportunity to enjoy the city because they had a lot to study and homework.

Overall students are very much satisfied with the city of Porto and would easily recommend it.

Regarding FEP, between motivations and expectations mentioned are as pull factors a good hospitality and more help from Portuguese colleagues, and as push factors the educational opportunity and the availability of interesting programs.

About the experience, there are no significant differences among the opinions of students from the various countries or programs. Both students from Mobility and Degree felt a little uncomfortable with the very demanding programs having always too much to study, some of the themes are boring, without interdisciplinary, much theory, with little detail or practical exercises. Most of bibliography is in English and it is not easy for some students to understand. A poor reception was also referred.

Linking to literature and considering FEP as a service provider, the importance of some aspects of physical evidence and people was confirmed: the appearance of the old building, the classes' structure. In general teachers had a good evaluation. Besides



people and referring to process on literature, the Mobility department help was very well appreciated despite the delay in replying to e-mails, and staff people in general was considered nice and helpful; the library was considered very well organized. On the other hand, the integration with Portuguese colleagues was not easy being considered as closed people but integration was positive with international students.

From the exploratory study, we conclude that Exchange students agree that FEP has good quality also found in staff and teachers; good reputation as already confirmed in the international university ranking and students complimented FEP during the discussions in focus groups; FEP is considered a big challenge as it is demanding and requires much study.

Nevertheless, there are some issues to be improved so as FEP can become a more pleasant place: the color of the building, the furniture, the blackboards, the heating system, all of these are old fashioned. On the other hand, classes are many times rather confusing, and teachers have different levels of English speaking. A lot of work is expected from students and the scheduling of the exams is not the best. According to many of the students this experience in FEP could be better if aspects like poor reception, insufficient follow up, difficult integration with Portuguese students and the lack of communication between teachers and students could be overtaken.

Overall, while some students would recommend FEP, others have more difficult to recommend without before explaining some of the not so good aspects.

Although some of the issues raised by the students might have an easy solution, others have to come across a longer way and a deeper strength because they imply some change of mentalities to be achieved. As seen in the literature review, a good promotion and marketing strategy are always important for a distinctive positioning of both brand “Porto” and “FEP” and attract more and more students. If expectations and motivations

about FEP are realized, Exchange students become satisfied and will recommend it to others for example by word of mouth.

Thus many of these students are in the city and faculty for a short-term, they should be considered as a long-term and in FEP should try to build in their minds remarkable experiences and create links that last long into the future. Therefore it is important for FEP to be aware of this work and try to deeply explore these opinions in order to improve its image, as its brand has already a good reputation. A reflection about mobility of students and a not so well prepared reception of international students should be done and contribute to better results in future.

Areas that can be more developed are: building, accommodation; preparation of a reception package; guided tour by the faculty; cultural visits and tour packages (travel across the city, visit other cities; and discount programs). A big approach of FEP with the Exchange students is possible, first having a description of the history and building, also having an interesting and completed list of their contacts, making follow up of their adaptation, accompany in choosing the accommodation, doing activities together with Portuguese students, for example once a month and a presentation of the city when they arrive together with a guided visit of the facilities, would be a plus to improve the relationship and create close links, as well as a better interaction, organization and responsibility of the tutors. More events and activities between FEP and the Câmara Municipal do Porto, for example a connection with the responsible for the cultural and tourism area of Porto to do some cultural visits and deliver promotional and specific material about the city with its different programs.

## 5.2 Limitations

This study presented some limitations. The exploratory nature of this study limits the generalization of results to the entire population. Thus, it is recommended for future research to complement focus group with other methods of data collection to better comprehension and confirmation of the results. The use of multiple choices of evidences allows a broader insight and develops converging lines and so the findings are likely to be more convincing (Yin, 2009).

The focus groups were made at once, already after the experience lived, which may have deviated in some way, like Exchange students do not reminding of their initial ideas about real expectations and motivations, being this influenced by the experiences. It would be interesting to do the future investigation divided in two parts: the first one when Exchange students are still on their countries or just after their arrival at Porto and first days at FEP and then the other part (with the same students) after the experience and when almost returning home.

Finally, this exploratory worked pretended to investigate an area still little studied in Portugal and Porto. It is of relevance to know better and see the importance of the Exchange students in our city and especially in FEP, hoping the work will be used to create a better relationship and better offer to this kind of students. After the work with Exchange students in FEP, another way may be to enlarge this investigation to all FEP students or Exchange students from U.Porto.

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U. PORTO



ECONOMICS AND MANAGEMENT

# ANNEXES



## ANNEX II

### FOCUS GROUP SESSION

#### WELCOME

Thank for being here and agreeing to be part of the focus group. Appreciate the availability to participate.

#### INTRODUCTION

My name is Ana Cláudia

I am doing a thesis on motivations, expectations and level of satisfaction of Exchange' students about the city of Porto and about FEP and need your help. This work is for finishing my Master in Marketing.

#### PURPOSE OF FOCUS GROUPS

The reason we are having these focus groups is to find out which were your main expectations and motivations when coming to Porto and also to know your overall experience and satisfaction about the city and university/FEP.

I need your input and want you to share your honest and open thoughts with all of us.

#### SOME RULES

I would like everyone to participate.

There are no right or wrong answers.

Every experiences and opinions are important.

Speak whether you agree or disagree. All comments are helpful.

What is said in this room stays here, so feel comfortable sharing when sensitive issues come up.

I will be recording the group, is there any problem? I want to capture everything you have to say because I don't want to miss any of your comments.

I won't identify anyone by name in the report. You will remain anonymous.

Well, let's begin.

**ICE BREAKER**

Let's find out some more about each other. Tell us your name, where are you from and a word to describe Porto

<b>Push and Pull Factors</b>		
Why did you decide to study abroad?		
Is this your first time out of your country? (First time in Portugal?)		
What was your sequence of choice to study here (Country/City/University/FEP)?		
Was it recommended or randomly chosen?		
Did you look for more information about the place and university, where (specify)?		
<b>THE CITY: PORTO</b>	Expectations	What did you look for?
	Accommodation	How was the process
	Hospitality	Where are you living

	<p>Tell me about your experience</p>       <p>Tell us an important story/event you passed</p> <p>Satisfaction</p> <p>Would you repeat the visit / experience?</p> <p>Would you recommend it to others?</p> <p>Tell us a word you describe Porto</p> <p>What color do you give to Porto</p>	<p>Tour packages</p> <p>Discount programs</p> <p>Activities: cultural, sports,..</p> <p>Facility of language</p> <p>Information services, help</p> <p>Life cost, food</p> <p>Easy or difficult</p> <p>What do you like most/less?</p> <p>Why?</p>
<p><b>THE UNIVERSITY / FEP</b></p>	<p>Expectations</p> <p>Reception</p> <p>Process of adaption/integration</p> <p>Contact with / Support</p> <p>Teachers</p> <p>Students</p> <p>Classes</p>	<p>Groups from FEP, EXUP</p> <p>Friends (Portuguese/others)</p> <p>Interest of disciplines</p> <p>Interaction</p> <p>Teaching methods</p>

	<p>Services</p> <p>Facilities</p> <p>Tell us an important story/event you passed in FEP</p> <p>Satisfaction</p> <p>What aspects could be improved</p> <p>Would you repeat the visit / experience?</p> <p>Would you recommend it to others?</p> <p>Tell us a word you describe FEP</p> <p>What color do you give to FEP</p>	<p>Mobility department</p> <p>Documentation</p> <p>Crucial contacts</p> <p>Events</p> <p>Library</p> <p>IT Services</p> <p>Compare with your own university</p> <p>Easy or difficult</p> <p>Expectations vs achievements</p> <p>What do you like most/less?</p> <p>Become ambassador of FEP?</p> <p>Why?</p>
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**CONCLUSION:**

How is this experience contributing to your future life? Is there anything more you want to say?

Give a little present, thank the participation and show how important it was.

Give my contact if someone wants to say something more.



ANNEX III

**Porto described in one word**

Participants were asked to say a word that reminded them of Porto, as an icebreaker strategy. Their answers are shown in next table.

Associating Porto into one word

Focus Group	Porto
FG1	Sea, river (FG1.1); Public transportation (FG1.2); City, infrastructures (FG1.3); Life, incredible (FG1.4); Oh, my God, it's marvelous (FG1.5); Special (FG1.6)
FG2	The river, pretty cool (FG2.1); Play football (FG2.2); Walk around (FG2.3); "Bifanas" (FG2.4); Go out, drink and being with friends (FG2.5); Party (FG2.6)
FG3	River, Sea, beach, people (FG3.1); People, Kindness (FG3.2); Climate (FG3.3); Ocean (FG3.4); Nice Portuguese people (FG3.5); Ocean (FG3.6); Unforgettable (FG3.7);
FG4	River, the bridge (FG4.1); Sunset (FG4.2); People (FG4.3); Big surprise (FG4.4); Infrastructure (FG4.5); City (FG4.6); People (FG4.7); Fresh fish (FG4.8)

Source: Author