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cultural destination”**

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# **Destination attributes and tourist's satisfaction in a cultural destination**

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**Subject area:** Tourism and regional development

## **Abstract:**

Cultural tourism is one of the leading growing segments of the tourism industry. Many tourists who visit heritage sites seek a value-added and authentic experience, when compared with the traditional products or mass destinations. Considering the importance of tourist's satisfaction in what regards the revisit intentions and word-of-mouth referrals, which in turn influence the economic development of the tourist destination, this study attempts to investigate the relationship between cultural/heritage destination attributes and tourist's satisfaction. The study area for this paper is the city of Guimarães, in the northwest of Portugal. This city is a place of strong symbolic and cultural significance and was deemed a world heritage site (UNESCO) in the year 2001. In 2012, Guimarães was one of the cities that hosted the European Capital of Culture (ECOC). All this enhanced its tourism potential and increased the amounts of visitors. The methodology consists of quantitative research based on a self-administered survey applied to tourists who visited Guimarães in the first half of 2015. Based upon the empirical results of this study, several recommendations can be made to increase

tourists' satisfaction vis-à-vis to Guimarães, regarding tourists' needs, attributes valorization and cultural/heritage sustainability.

**Keywords:** Cultural tourism, destination attributes, Guimarães, tourists' satisfaction.

**JEL codes:** L83, R58

## **Introduction**

Within the major role tourism industry is taking in enhancing growth in economies all around the world, the cultural segment deserves a particular look, as in most of the cases it is paying a leading role. This has close to do with the idea of tourist visit as a memorable happening and an authentic experience and relates to the psychological dimension motivation of tourists demand.

In this regard, it is worthy to keep in mind the features of tourism consumption which distinguish it from other kind of consumptions demands, namely:

- i) its emotional value, which implies a strong commitment of the consumer in the acquisition process and great expectancy around the benefits it can profit from. Synthetizing this, Holloway and Humphreys, in a paper dated from 2012, as cited by Almeida (2015, p. 15), made use of the expression “Selling holidays is selling dreams”;
- ii) the need of the consumer to visit the place where the consumption of the product/service takes place, which transforms the place, itself, in an intrinsic component of the experience (Kastenholz, 2002; Almeida, 2015), specially truth if the site has a deep cultural significance;
- iii) the composite nature of the tourist product, that is, the access to a particular tourism product always implies the consumption of a set of other different services/products (transport, accommodation, meals, leisure, environment, shopping and so on), which, from the contribution of each one and of the all set, can transform the visit in something memorable or not at all enjoyable (Vanhove, 2004; Chi and Qu, 2008; Almeida, 2015).

As mentioned, in these circumstances, the individuals' psychological dimensions pay a major role in the definition of preferences and tastes of tourists, and, this way, in their consumption behavior and on the satisfaction their get from that consumption (Yoon and Uysal, 2005; Cunha, 2007; Martin and Bosque, 2008; Carvalho, Salazar and

Ramos, 2015). Putting other way, tourism consumption is much more than tourism economic demand. This is particularly through if we are dealing with an increasingly quality demanding and active type of tourist, that is, looking for a diversified and active tourism experience (Kastenholz, 2002; Cunha, 2007).

In such circumstances, to get a good knowledge of the tourists behavior and of their overall satisfaction towards a destination or a set of tourism attributes a site can supply is essential for tourism managers and marketers to better positioning and promoting the destination (Yoon and Uysal, 2005; Chi and Qu, 2008; Martin and Bosque, 2008). If tourists got satisfied with their travel experience, they will tend to revisit the destination and recommend it to relatives and friends (Yoon and Uysal, 2005).

Taking the case of Guimarães, in this paper we inquire on the level of satisfaction tourists get from its visit and the destination attributes. This way, we will try to get a better look to the attributes of the city that are more valued by visitors and if the features of the city that have been promoted by local tourism authorities match with the city image perceived by visitors. In this inquiring of the satisfaction tourists got from visiting the destination, a special look will be put on the one of satisfaction versus loyalty, as research has been underlining that enjoying a site is not the same of wishing to repeat the visit (Bigné, Sanchez and Sanchez, 2001; Nam, Ekinici and Whayatt, 2011).

Guimarães is a middle size city located in the northwest part of Portugal, endowed of a historical centre classified by UNESCO as world cultural heritage and an international emergent tourism destination.

The data used come from a survey that has being conducted to the tourists by the tourism services of the municipality and that was designed by that entity together with this research team. The results presented in this paper are just a first exploration of those data. Just by the end of the year we are expecting to have the amount answers and seasonal coverage that will allow us to have the full picture of the situation, that is, a set of data statistically consistent vis-à-vis the aim of this research.

This paper is organized as follows: in the first section, we will make a brief review of the literature on tourists' satisfaction, addressing, mainly, those destinations endowed of a cultural nature; in the second section, we will present the analytical methodology used and produce a summary description of the city that is object of our analysis; the results of the empirical study conducted are presented in the third section, followed by its

discussion; in the last section we have the conclusions, and a few policy recommendations, besides the enouncing of the major limitations of the research undertaken.

### **1. Destination attributes and tourists' satisfaction**

Looking to the sources of economic development of a territory, country or region, we will always arrive to its resources and capabilities. The resources can be of different nature (physical, financial, human, cultural, technological, institutional), but the critical issue when looking to the development of a territory is its capabilities, that is, the ability to take profit from its resources endowment (Cadima Ribeiro and Freitas Santos, 2008). Putting other way, we are speaking of the existing ability for a set of resources to perform some tasks or activities at the highest standards, as economic activity requires the co-operation and co-ordination of sets of resources.

As said, the resources can be, both, tangible and intangible, and can be mobilized to increase region's reputation and confer a competitive advantage to certain products. The returns of a region's resources depend upon the ability of local firms to appropriate the rents earned and whether the consumers value the characteristics that are associated with the product (Cadima Ribeiro and Freitas Santos, 2008).

From what has been just said, one can understand the critical role in this path is paid by consumers satisfaction. The resources can be natural, cultural or of other nature but the products extracted from them need to be able to address a particular consumers' need and a certain territory endowment must be competitive towards others which supply a similar portfolio of products. Even dealing with cultural products and tourism destinations, the issue keeps being the same.

In this regard, the main difference of common products to the tourist ones has to do with its composite nature and the need of visiting the place where the consumption of the product/service takes place (Kastenholz, 2002; Vanhove, 2004; Almeida, 2015). Due to that, also, as underlined by Carvalho, Salazar and Ramos (2015), one may admit that the branding of the places (tourism destinations) is different from the branding of products, as places are endowed with more complexity than single products.

One believes it is worthy to explicitly say, too, that, besides dealing with resources and products, we must keep in mind the concept of attributes (tourism attributes), which are

the features of a product or service as perceived by the consumer (the tourist) (Carvalho, Salazar and Ramos, 2015). Having in mind the composite nature of the tourism product, that enhances the complexity of the competitive positioning of the destinations and of their advertising and promotion.

Among the researchers that have approached the issue of satisfaction felt by tourists towards a destination or a tourist product, we can find Oliver (1999) and Bigné, Sanchez and Sanchez (2001). According to the first author (Oliver, 1999), satisfaction regards the way the consumer evaluates the consumption of a product or service, which keeps a close relationship with the fulfilment of the provision of that product or service as it was expected. Even when dealing with a repeated provision, the level of satisfaction attained just can be evaluated post- consumption and is valid just in a temporary base. This idea, that satisfaction has to do with consumption experience and the expectations kept by the consumer, was also underlined by Grönroos (2004) and Yoon and Uysal (2005).

Also addressing the thematic of tourists' satisfaction Chi and Qu (2008), following a review of literature, have underlined that destination image kept by visitors will influence the process of choosing a destination and, moreover, destination image influences perceived quality and satisfaction.

In the case of Bigné, Sanchez and Sanchez (2001), they centered their analysis in the relationship between destination image, based on its product attributes, and quality, satisfaction and loyalty. From that focus, they concluded that the quality of the provision of the product or service has a positive influence on satisfaction and in the intention to repeat the visit. Even so, the relationship between satisfaction and return intention was considered not to have been demonstrated (Bigné, Sanchez and Sanchez, 2001).

Regarding the importance of the attributes, Chi and Qu (2008), from their empirical research, in line with what had been claimed by Oliver (1993) and other authors have concluded that attributes satisfaction as significant, and positive, influence on overall satisfaction. They use the expression “it can be said that tourists overall satisfaction was determined by destination image and attribute satisfaction” (Chi and Qu, 2008, p. 632), adding that attributes satisfaction has also shown to be an antecedent of destination loyalty. Not surprising, they conclude too that satisfaction affects directly and positively, destination loyalty (Chi and Qu, 2008), in line with previous evidence (see,

for example, Yoon and Unysal, 2005). Satisfied tourists are more likely to repeat visits and, moreover, sharing their positive experience with relatives and friends.

With regard to the intention to return to a certain destination, it is worthy to mention that Nam, Ekinci and Whayatt (2011) have claimed that loyalty and repeated visits are not the same, that is, following their approach, tourists can show to be loyal to a destination and, even so, not to return to it. Explaining their reasoning about the issue, they distinguish among behavior loyalty and psychological commitment, emphasizing that the first one (behavior loyalty) is more appropriate to approach consumer loyalty in the tourism industry. The same way, Yoon and Uysal (2005) admit that tourists' loyalty to products or destinations may be not enough to expect them to return or recommend those products or sites to family and friends.

As results from previous research performed about tourists satisfaction towards Guimarães (Freitas Santos *et al.*, 2013), this issue of satisfaction versus loyalty is surely one that deserves a particularly insight in the empirical approach to be performed in this paper.

## **2. Analytical methodology and summary presentation of the destination**

### **2.1. Analytical methodology**

As mentioned in the introduction, data used came from a survey that has being conducted to the tourists by the tourism services of the municipality and the questionnaire was designed by that entity together with this research team. The results presented in this paper are a first approach to the issue, using the data already collected. Just by the end of the year we are expecting to have the amount of answers that will allow us to have the full picture of the situation under investigation.

Taking profit of the survey data, the methodology used in this empirical study has a quantitative nature and, has enounced, envisaged concluding on the level of satisfaction tourists get from visiting the tourism destination chosen as focus of this analysis, having in mind its attributes. In that approach a special look will be put on the satisfaction versus loyalty, in relation with the subject of the city being able or not of capturing repeated visits.



The questionnaire applied includes a total of 22 questions, mostly of them categorized and closed, and Portuguese and English versions were used in the approach to visitors. Before its application, a pre-text was conducted, allowing adjusting some of the questions, in order to use a language better understood by eventual respondents and check the time the survey needed to be full answered. The local chosen for applying the survey was the tourism offices that exist in the city of Guimarães. This way, the respondents have full support from the staff of the offices to fill in it.

The survey includes three main parts: one dealing with the visit to the destination and the motivation behind it; a second where the tourist is invited to express his/her opinion towards the attributes of the city and the level of satisfaction he/her got from that visit, and, additionally, to the intention to return or to recommend the visit to Guimarães to family and friends (the identification of having chosen the destination previously is also inquired in this section); in a third part the visitors are inquired about their socio-demographic features (gender, age, education, local of residence, being or not married, level of income).

In the question rose about the attributes of the destination, a five points Likert scale is used were 1 means total disagreement and 5 means full agreement. In this research, having in mind the research issue identified, just a few of the questions the survey includes are analyzed.

Besides, using descriptive statistics, chi-squares tests and *t* tests are used in the analysis to check the statistical significance of the results we got.

## **2.2. Summary presentation of the destination**

Guimarães is a middle size city located in the Ave Valley, in the northern part of Portugal. With its distinctive 10th-century castle, it is considered the cradle of the Portuguese nation. The city has many traditional buildings from the 15th to the 19th centuries.

The Ave Valley has been for centuries an industrial district, endowed with an economic basis constituted by traditional manufacturing activities, such as textiles, clothes and footwear. The tourism industry had developed recently and has been playing a complementary role since then.

The city has a central geographical location, being 50 km from Oporto and less than that from the Oporto airport, the main air entrance door of visitors in the northern Portugal.

The hosting of the 2012 European Capital of Culture and its certification by UNESCO, in 2001, as a world heritage site, has promoted its external visibility.

Since 2000, Guimarães has experienced a sustainable growth in the amount of visitors, attaining 70,075 in 2009, following data collected by the tourism offices of the city. According the same source, invoked by Universidade do Minho (2013) and Remoaldo *et al.* (2014), with the hosting of the 2012 European Capital of Culture, the city experienced a pick of tourists, which have fallen in the following years to the sustainable growth trend coming from previous years.

Despite the increasing number of visitors, the average stay for foreign guests keeps being quite low (less than 2.0 nights, following the national statistics data, much less than the mainland Portugal average – more than 3 nights). With regards to the proportion of foreign guests, Guimarães also falls below the national average and the visitors use to come, mostly, from the European Union countries: besides Portugal, Spain, France and Germany are the first tourists' sources (Universidade do Minho, 2013; Remoaldo *et al.*, 2014).

### **3. Empirical results and discussion**

As mentioned, data considered in the empirical approach were collected using a survey applied to the tourists that visited Guimarães in the first half of 2015. The results presented in this paper are a first exploration of those data, suffering from some limitations, within each the amount of tourists inquired, still scarce to derive final conclusions on main of the issues we can address based on that data. Just by the end of the year we are expecting to have the amount of answers and a coverage of all tourism seasons which will allow us to produce a more consistent analysis.

Nevertheless, the total of 233 survey questionnaires that were collected until the end of July of 2015 and analyzed are in line with the average used in several investigations (e.g., Poria, Reichel and Biran, 2006; Yankholmes and Akyeampong, 2010) . In the first research 205 interviews were conducted at an historic site (Anne Frank House in Amsterdam, the Netherlands), and in the second one 218 questionnaires were applied at another heritage site (Danish-Osu, Ghana).

Table 1 refers to the socio-demographic profile of the survey respondents, which we decide organize differentiating first visits from repeated ones. Based on that, the chi-square test was used to identify structural changes in the profile of the visitors, that is, the new comers' vis-à-vis those which were returning to the destination.

As can be observed in Table 1, the profile of the visitors is structured around an equilibrium of males and females, aged from 26 to 65 years old (88.4%), well educated (those which have an university degree plus those that have a master or a PhD degree account for 60%), married (67.3%), coming from Portugal (domestic market) or from abroad in parts quite close.

Looking to the issue of a 1<sup>st</sup> or a repeated visit, the most remarkable is the major differences detected in what regards education and residence, as indicated by the chi-square test. Regarding education, the results show that 1<sup>st</sup> visitors are endowed of higher levels of education than those which are returning to the destination, in relation, may be, with the enhancing of the cultural profile of the destination. In what regards residence, what is remarkable is the relative amount of foreigners among the Guimarães' tourists. In the other hand, Portuguese tourists tend to repeat the visit more than foreigners.

**Table 1.** Some respondents' characteristics

	1 <sup>st</sup> visit		Repeat		Total		X <sup>2</sup>	Sig.
	N (180)	% (77.3)	N (53)	% (22.7)	N (233)	% (100)		
<i>Gender</i>							0.015	0.904
Male	90	50.0	26	49.1	116	49.8		
Female	90	50.0	27	50.9	117	50.2		
<i>Age</i>							1.683	0.641
0-25	9	5.0	4	7.7	13	5.6		
26-45	90	50.0	23	44.2	113	48.7		
46-65	69	38.3	23	44.2	92	39.7		
More than 65	12	6.7	2	3.8	14	6.0		
<i>Education</i>							19.463	0.000*
Basic	8	4.4	10	18.9	18	7.7		
Secondary	52	28.9	23	43.4	75	32.2		
University	74	41.1	13	24.5	87	37.3		
Masters/Doctorate	46	25.6	7	13.2	53	22.7		
<i>Marital status</i>							1.502	0.682
Single	40	22.9	9	18.8	49	22.0		
Married	108	61.7	34	70.8	142	63.7		
Divorced/Widow	27	15.4	5	10.4	32	14.4		

<i>Residence</i>							38.740	0.000*
Portugal	18	10.0	25	48.1	43	18.5		
Foreigner	162	90.0	27	51.9	189	81.5		

Source: authors' own survey data.

\* indicated  $p < 0.01$

This relative amount of foreigners among the visitors can be looked either as a surplus of the image gotten from destination abroad in recent years or as limitation of the implementation of the survey in the Guimarães tourism offices, where, may be, Portuguese visitors tend to go less than foreigners, or, even, of both.

Before addressing the issue of the tourists perceived attributes of Guimarães, it is worthy to say something about the motivations behind their choice of the destination. The table 2 presents that. According to it (Table 2), taking all the sample, the choice of Guimarães had to do, first, with being part of a tour around the cities of the “region” (Touring, visiting cities in the region), mentioned by 72.5% of the respondents. As a second reason comes being a World Heritage Site and as third its Architectural Heritage, close related with the previous one, underlying, this way, the importance of the cultural patrimony of the destination in the visitors' attraction. Not far from the third in terms of mentions comes the circumstance of having hosted the 2012 European Capital of Culture, together with the idea of taking profit from the Cultural Activities supplied by the city. All considered, we believe we can speak of a cultural motivation behind the choice of the destination, that is, the image of the town is mostly associated to its cultural characteristics and, being so, we believe there is place to believe we are dealing with cultural tourism, mostly.

**Table 2.** Tourists' motivations

	1 <sup>st</sup> visit		Repeat		Total		X <sup>2</sup>	Sig.
	N	%	N	%	N	%		
1. It is a World Heritage Site	119	66.1	30	56.6	149	63.9	1.605	0.205
2. Touring, visiting cities in the region	140	77.8	29	54.7	169	72.5	10.929	0.001*
3. Business	13	7.2	5	9.4	18	7.7	a	
4. Religious motivation	17	9.4	15	28.3	32	13.7	12.289	0.000*
5. Gastronomy and Wines	50	27.8	31	58.5	81	34.8	17.030	0.000*
6. Conferences and Seminars	12	6.7	6	11.3	18	7.7	a	
7. Cultural Activities	68	37.8	16	30.2	84	36.1	1.023	0.312
8. Sports events	12	6.7	6	11.3	18	7.7	a	
9. Visit to family and friends	22	12.2	16	30.2	38	16.3	9.683	0.002*
10. European Capital of Culture 2012	67	37.2	17	32.1	84	36.1	0.470	0.493
11. Architectural heritage	77	42.8	19	35.8	96	41.2	0.811	0.368

Source: authors' own survey data.

\* indicated  $p < 0.01$

a. The chi-square test was not conducted since some cells have an expected count of less than 5.

Looking again to the segmentation between visitors that were visiting it for the first time and repeating ones, it is worthy to underline the importance that seems to take the Gastronomy and Wines for those returning to the destination, as underlined by the chi-square statistics, and, in a far second and third levels, Visit to Family and Friends (in some cases, we are speaking of Portuguese immigrants) and Religious Motivation. In the opposite situation, that is, as a reason for a first visit, distinguishing first visitors from those which were returning to the destination, comes the Touring, Visiting Cities in the Region motive.

Of course, the motivation of someone to choose a destination has a close relationship with his/her preferences, that is, the kind of tourism experience he/she wants to live, and the perceived attributes of the site elected. In the second part of the questionnaire tourists were asked to what extent they agree/disagree with the characteristics and attributes of the city based on the five-point Likert scale (1= total disagreement to 5= full agreement). Table 3 refers to the rank of perceived attributes of Guimarães according, again, by both first visitors and those who were repeating the visit to the city. Generally speaking, there is not a marked difference found in the way both groups rank the perceived attributes of the destination. Even so, a few differences do exist, being worthy to mention those where a statistical difference could be found, namely the attributes being a Safe city, Quality and Diversity of Restaurants and Coffee Shops, Good Gastronomy and Quality and Diversity of General Shops, Good Range of Entertainment in Terms of Quality and Quantity, and Good Shopping Opportunities, better perceived by those who have been there before. This said, it seems one can conclude from this results that the destination has to offer much more than it seems to a first visitor.

**Table 3.** The perceived attributes of Guimarães

	1 <sup>st</sup> visit			Repeat			t-value	Sig.
	Rank	Mean score	SD	Rank	Mean score	SD		
Cleaning of visited sites	1	4.57	0.660	1	4.66	0.586	-0.875	0.382
Good rehabilitation of Historical Centre	2	4.53	0.620	1	4.66	0.517	-1.500	0.137
Relevant, artistic and monumental heritage	3	4.49	0.664	2	4.58	0.57	-0.899	0.370
Welcoming City	4	4.42	0.754	2	4.58	0.602	-1.490	0.138
Safe city	5	4.24	0.808	4	4.51	0.724	-2.193	0.029**
Linked to the origin of Portuguese Nationality	5	4.24	0.863	7	4.36	0.922	-0.833	0.406
Professionalism in service delivery	6	4.22	0.788	5	4.45	0.695	-1.921	0.056
Good value for money of services	7	4.09	0.800	8	4.28	0.662	-1.611	0.109
Good signage and tourist information	8	4.06	0.853	10	4.13	0.900	-0.526	0.600
Quality and diversity of restaurants and coffee shops	9	3.99	0.787	6	4.38	0.882	-3.026	0.003*

Good Gastronomy	10	3.96	0.864	3	4.55	0.607	-5.618	0.000*
Quality and diversity of general shops	11	3.76	0.779	9	4.19	0.833	-3.455	0.001*
Good dissemination of cultural events	11	3.76	0.836	14	3.89	0.993	-0.875	0.385
Good transport services	12	3.68	0.787	13	3.94	0.842	-2.081	0.039**
Quality hotels	13	3.66	0.726	11	4.09	0.838	-3.683	0.000*
Good range of entertainment in terms of quality	13	3.66	0.820	11	4.09	0.904	-3.302	0.001*
Good shopping opportunities	14	3.64	0.836	9	4.19	0.810	-4.193	0.000*
Good range of entertainment in terms of quantity	15	3.63	0.790	12	4.06	0.969	-3.248	0.001*

Source: authors' own survey data.

SD = standard deviation.

\* indicated  $p < 0.01$

\*\* indicated  $p < 0.05$

Underlying this, that is, the reasons behind a second or a third visit to a destination, we are approaching the issue of tourists' satisfaction towards the products or services they could benefit from and/or the experience they could live. Table 4 refers to that.

**Table 4.** Satisfaction and recommendation

	1 <sup>st</sup> visit (N=180)		Repeat (N=53)		t-value	Sig.
	Agree (%) <sup>1</sup>	Average scores	Agree (%) <sup>1</sup>	Average scores <sup>2</sup>		
Global quality of destination <sup>2</sup>	93.4	4.30	100	4.66	-4.083	0.000*
Satisfaction with holidays in Guimarães <sup>3</sup>	93.3	4.36	100	4.66	-3.720	0.000*
Will return <sup>4</sup>	44.5	3.33	71.7	4.17	-5.290	0.000*
Recommendation to family and friends <sup>5</sup>	93.9	4.56	88.7	4.55	0.131	0.896

Source: authors' own survey data.

Notes: <sup>1</sup> percentage of respondents that agree are those that answered 4 or 5 on the 5-point likert scales; <sup>2</sup> scale ranges from 1=bad to 5=excellent; <sup>3</sup> scale ranges from 1=not at all satisfied to 5=very satisfied; <sup>4</sup> scale ranges from 1=0% hypothesis to 5=100% hypothesis; <sup>5</sup> scale ranges from 1=not recommend to 5=strongly recommend.

\* indicated  $p < 0.01$

From a first look at the table (Table 4), what seems to be most impressive is the deep contrast between the overall Satisfaction with Holidays in Guimarães, together with the declared willingness of recommending its visit to relatives and friends (Recommendation to Family and Friends) and the intention to return (Will Return). In this regard, the finds of the literature provide us with suitable explanations, that is, enjoying a destination and repeat the visit is not the same (Yoon and Uysal, 2005; Nam, Ekinci and Whayatt, 2011).

In their approach to this issue focused on the same destination, Freitas Santos, Vareiro, Remoaldo, and Cadima Ribeiro (2013) have related this with the size (small/medium) of

the city, expressed in the set of tourism products perceived by visitors, at a first glance. This interpretation is consistent with the difference of results on the issue gotten from first visits and repeated visits (Table 4), which show to be statistically significant in all items except in the referred to Recommendation to Family and Friends, where both groups converge in expressing a very positive approach. The level of agreement expressed by returning tourism on the Global Quality of Destination and with the Satisfaction with Holidays they enjoyed in Guimarães is also consistent with this interpretation.

The results gotten in terms of declared of overall satisfaction are in line with the ones we got for the attributes satisfaction, not questioning the findings of Chi and Qu (2008), who have claimed that attributes satisfaction can be taken as an antecedent of destination loyalty. By its turn, having in mind the high level of satisfaction unanimous declared by respondents and the intention to repeat the visit to the destination, one as to convey, following Nam, Ekinici and Whayatt (2011) and Yoon and Uysal (2005) that behavior loyalty and psychological commitment are not the same, and behavior loyalty seems to be more appropriate to approach consumer loyalty in the tourism industry.

As a last comment on the results shown in Table 4, having in mind the differences of behavior declared from first and repeated visitors, the main idea that comes to mind is that the quality of the provision of the product or service does have a positive influence on satisfaction and in the intention to repeat the visit, as assumed by Bigné, Sanchez and Sanchez (2001), namely.

All add, we believe the destination is succeeding to perform well, suffering from not having a consolidate image in the tourism market and, almost certainly, from not being able of adequately advertising the set of products and services it can provide to visitors. Regarding the advertising of the destination there is a matter of budget, together with the national tourism strategy, which puts more emphasis on the promotion of other products and destinations.

## **Conclusions and recommendations**

This preliminary study focused on a cultural destination, Guimarães. Two main objectives were defined: first, we envisaged getting a picture of the destination perceived tourism attributes, this way, also, indirectly approaching the profile of the

visitors; second, we wanted to conclude on the level of satisfaction tourists got from its visit. In this inquiring of the satisfaction tourists got from visiting the destination, a special look was put on the one of satisfaction versus loyalty. All these analyses were made considering first time visitors versus repeated visitors.

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

The empirical research has revealed that visitors from Guimarães are, both, males and females, aged from 26 to 65, well educated and married. Although, first time tourists are better educated than repeating tourists and Portuguese visitors tend to return more often than foreigner ones.

Looking to the motivations behind tourists choice of the destination, taking all the sample, the choice of Guimarães had to do, first, with being part of a tour around the cities of the “region”. As a second reason comes being a World Heritage Site and as third its Architectural Heritage. Not far from the third in terms of mentions comes the circumstance of having hosted the 2012 European Capital of Culture, together with the idea of taking profit from the Cultural Activities supplied by the city. This way, we believe we can speak of visitors mostly endowed with a cultural motivation.

Looking to the segmentation between visitors that were visiting the destination for the first time and repeating ones, it is noticeable the importance that seems to take the Gastronomy and Wines for those returning to the destination, while the Touring is far from any other the main motivation of first time visitors.

The comparison of the mean scores of the attributes of Guimarães across first time visitors and repeated visitors reveals that there is not a market difference found in the way both groups rank the perceived attributes of the destination. However, repeated visitors had higher averages in all attributes. T-test results indicated that differences were statistically significant in what regards Safe city, Quality and Diversity of Restaurants and Coffee Shops, Good Gastronomy and Quality and Diversity of General Shops, Good Range of Entertainment in Terms of Quality and Quantity, and Good Shopping Opportunities.

In what regards satisfaction, first and repeated visitors, following their responses to the survey, have shown a good level of overall satisfaction towards the visit to the



destination. Meanwhile, looking to the returning intention, the main conclusion is that the quality of the provision of the product or service does have a positive influence on satisfaction and in the intention to repeat the tourist visit but is not enough to explain it, a result which is in line with what has been found by the empirical literature on the issue.

Linking the results found and the derived policy recommendations, we believe the destination is suffering from not having a consolidated image in the tourism market and from not being able to adequately advertise the set of products and services it can provide to visitors. In such circumstances, one can say that it is performing quite well. This advertising issue has to do with budget constraints, but also with options taken at national level, where much more emphasis has been put on the promotion of other products and destinations.

As mentioned, the results presented in this paper are a first approach to the research subject chosen, and a first exploration of data collected through a survey that will be conducted until the end of 2015. This way, just then we are expecting to have the amount of answers and a full coverage of the tourism seasons which will allow us to have the full picture of the situation under investigation.

The adequacy of the sample is under question as the amount of foreigners among the visitors is larger than was expected, having in mind previous data on the destination visitors. If confirmed, this biased sample is a consequence of the option taken of implementing the survey in the Guimarães tourism offices, where, eventually, Portuguese visitors tend to go less than foreigners. Being so, this is a major limitation that should be surpassed in future research.

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