

Segmenting tourists by expenditure patterns: An instrument for enhancing tourism economic benefits on a Portuguese World Heritage site

Segmentação do mercado turístico de acordo com o **padrão de despesa**: Um instrumento para **maximizar** os **benefícios económicos** do turismo num destino português Património Mundial

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Objectives | Tourism is an activity with high potential for stimulating the development of local economies, with different types of visitors having distinct environmental, social and economic effects on destinations (Lundie, Dwyer, & Forsyth, 2007; Nickerson, Jorgenson, & Boley, 2016). Notwithstanding, there is a research gap on strategies aimed at maximizing the economic relevance of tourism for local tourism destinations using market segmentation, based on visitors' daily expenditure level at the destination, as a starting point (Lima, Eusébio, & Kastenholz, 2012). This gap becomes more evident when we refer to World Heritage Sites (WHS) destinations (Amir, Osman, Bachok, & Ibrahim, 2016). This study presents the results of the tourist market segmentation of a Portuguese municipality - Évora, a UNESCO's WHS, located in Alentejo. The study aims to identify the homogenous groups of visitors that prevail in a WHS destination based on expenditure patterns and furthermore at contributing to the

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development of marketing strategies to enhance the economic development of this cultural destination.

Methodology | A visitor survey was designed to identify the tourist profile of the heritage site of Évora. The target of this research were visitors of the historic city center (downtown). The questionnaire to visitors collected data on three main topics: socio-demographic data; background behaviour, i.e. that prior to the visit; and behaviour during the visit. The questionnaire was applied using a direct, personal administration approach. A pilot test was conducted with 50 questionnaires, between February and March of 2015. The inputs provided by the pilot test proved the questionnaire meets the research objectives, needing only some small language adjustments. The data collection occurred during the spring and summer of 2015 (April-August), when there is the greatest number of guests in hotel establishments of Évora (INE, 2015). The inquiry points were selected according to the most visited monuments that are located in the historic city centre. The sampling adopted method was a probabilistic method, by a random sample. A total of 465 usable questionnaires were obtained. Considering data analysis procedures and methods, a cluster analysis was applied to identify homogeneous groups (segments) of visitors in terms of daily expenditure *per capita*. The Ward's method, as a hierarchical method, was adopted to obtain the clusters. Adequate tests were used to verify differences between segments, according to sociodemographic profile, travel motivations, trip behaviour and degree of satisfaction with destination attributes.

Main Results and Contributions | Three distinct segments were identified and show statistically significant differences regarding their economic relevance for the destination, socio-demographic profile, motivations, expenditure patterns, trip behaviour and satisfaction. The segment with higher expenditure level integrates relatively more foreign visitors, visitors with higher duration of stay, that are relatively more satisfied with accommodation, security, hospitality of the community, conditions of public spaces and with the weather at the destination. This segment also concentrates visitors that spend much more on meals, shopping and recreational activities at the destination than the other two. The recognition of Évora as WHS has promoted not only the preservation of heritage but also the development of tourism in this small city (Borges, Serra & Marujo, 2011). Some managerial implications are provided with this research, namely for local trade and local/regional tourism authorities. Thus, segmenting the market according to the visitors' total daily expenditure will contribute to define marketing strategies that enhance the contribution of tourism to Évora's economic development. Understand the socio-demographics and travel behaviour of each segment are critical steps to evaluate the destination's capacity of attracting and satisfying each segment (Lima et al., 2012; Marujo, Sera & Borges, 2012), assuring the success of those strategies.

Limitations | The main limitation of this study is the lack of statistical background information on the total number of visitors of Évora, not allowing an examination of the representativeness of the sample - a frequent problem in tourist surveys (Eusébio, Kastenholz, & Carneiro, 2003). Also it should be interesting to collect and analyse data for larger periods of time in order to consider seasonality effects.

Conclusions | The results obtained confirm the relevance of tourists' expenditure level as a variable for strategic destination marketing (Díaz-Pérez, Bethencourt-Cejas, & Álvarez-González, 2005; Legohérel & Wong, 2006; Lima et al. 2012; Eusébio, Lopes, & Carneiro, 2016). Also, the application of the model

to data obtained for the municipality of Évora contributed to the discussion of strategic marketing, both generally for WHS and for the particular case under study. This research contributed to characterize the effective profile of the tourist market of Évora and to understand the perceptions that visitors have about some attributes of the destination. Additionally, the study assessed visitors' expenditures and characterize the segments that may be considered as those with highest economic potential for the destination.

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