



# **CULTURAL DESTINATION'S ATTRIBUTES AND TOURISTS' SATISFACTION: DIFFERENCES BETWEEN FIRST TIME AND REPEATED VISITS<sup>1</sup>**

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## **Abstract**

Considering the importance of tourists' satisfaction in regards to their intentions of revisiting the destination and providing word-of-mouth referrals, this study attempts to investigate the differences between first time and repeated visitors in terms of the perceived attributes of cultural/heritage destinations, tourists' satisfaction and intention to return and to recommend a destination. The current case study is the city of Guimarães, in Portugal. The research methodology consists of a quantitative approach based on a self-administered survey applied to tourists who visited Guimarães during 2015. Looking at the empirical results, it was possible to conclude that first time and recurrent

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visitors showed no noticeable difference in the way the perceived attributes of the destination were ranked. In terms of satisfaction, both first time and repeated visitors showed a high level of overall satisfaction with their visit. However, this aspect seems to be insufficient to guarantee their willingness to return. Based on the results, several recommendations may be made to increase tourists' satisfaction vis-à-vis Guimarães, not forgetting tourists' needs, attributes valorisation and cultural/heritage sustainability.

**Keywords:** Cultural tourism; destination's attributes; Guimarães; recommendation; tourists' satisfaction.

## **ATRIBUTOS DO DESTINO CULTURAL E SATISFAÇÃO DOS TURISTAS: DIFERENÇAS ENTRE A PRIMEIRA VEZ E VISITAS REPETIDAS**

### **Resumo**

Considerando a importância da satisfação dos turistas em relação às suas intenções de visitar o destino e fornecer referências boca-a-boca, este estudo tenta investigar as diferenças entre os visitantes iniciantes e repetidos em termos dos atributos percebidos dos destinos culturais / patrimoniais, satisfação dos turistas e intenção de voltar e recomendar um destino. O presente estudo de caso é a cidade de Guimarães, em Portugal. A metodologia de pesquisa consiste em uma abordagem quantitativa baseada em uma pesquisa auto-administrada aplicada a turistas que visitaram Guimarães durante 2015. Olhando para os resultados empíricos, foi possível concluir que visitantes iniciantes e recorrentes não mostraram nenhuma diferença perceptível na forma como a percepção atributos do destino foram classificados. Em termos de satisfação, tanto visitantes iniciantes quanto repetidos mostraram um alto nível de satisfação geral com a visita. No entanto, esse aspecto parece ser insuficiente para garantir sua disposição de retorno. Com base nos resultados, várias recomendações podem ser feitas para aumentar a satisfação dos turistas vis-à-vis Guimarães, não esquecendo as necessidades dos turistas, atributos de valorização e sustentabilidade cultural / patrimonial.

**Palavras-chave:** Turismo cultural; atributos do destino; Guimarães; recomendação; satisfação dos turistas.

## Introduction

Generally, one may say that consumers choose a product or service according to how closely it matches their tastes, interests, also taking into consideration how it may transform them (their lives and their way of thinking - MERMIRI, 2009).

Within the major role the tourism industry is taking in enhancing growth in economies all around the world, the cultural segment deserves a particular look, as in most cases it plays a leading role. This is closely related to the idea that a tourist visit is both a memorable event and an authentic experience (REMOALDO et al., 2014a; YANKHOLMES; AKYEAMPONG, 2010) and pertains to the psychological dimension and the motivation of tourists' demands.

In this regard, it is worth keeping tourism consumption and the features that distinguish it from other types of consumption demands in mind, namely:

i) its emotional value, implying a strong commitment by the consumer in the acquisition process and the high expectation around the benefits one may profit from it; summarising this, Holloway, and Humphreys (2012: 8) used the expression "Selling holidays is like selling dreams";

ii) the need for the consumer to visit the place where the consumption of the product/service takes place, which transforms the place itself into an intrinsic component of the experience (ALMEIDA, 2015; KASTENHOLZ, 2002), especially true if the place has a deep cultural meaning;

iii) the complex nature of the tourist product, that is, the access to a particular tourist 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 on the whole, can transform the visit into something memorable or not at all enjoyable (ALMEIDA, 2015; CHI; QU, 2008; VANHOVE, 2004).

As referred to, in these circumstances, a person's psychological dimension plays a major role in the definition of tourists' tastes, preferences, in their consumption behaviour and in the satisfaction they get from that very same consumption (BOSQUE; MARTIN, 2008; CARVALHO et al., 2015; CUNHA, 2007; MARTIN; BOSQUE, 2008; YOON; UYSAL, 2005). Putting it another way, tourism consumption is much more than economic tourist demand (AGAPITO et al., 2013). This is particularly true if we are dealing with an increasing demand in quality and an active tourist, that is, a tourist looking for an active

and diversified tourist experience (CUNHA, 2007; KASTENHOLZ, 2002; KIM, 2014; RICHARDS, 2011).

In such circumstances, to obtain clearer and better knowledge of tourists' behaviour and of their overall satisfaction towards a specific destination or a set of the tourist attributes a place can offer, it is essential for tourism managers and marketers to better position and promote the destination (BOSQUE; MARTIN, 2008; CHI; QU, 2008; GUZMAN-PARRA et al., 2016; MARTIN, BOSQUE, 2008; YOON; UYSAL, 2005). If tourists are satisfied with their travel experience, the tendency is for them to revisit the destination and recommend it to relatives and friends (BOSQUE; MARTIN, 2008; GENG-QING; QU, 2008; YOON; UYSAL, 2005).

Using Guimarães as a case study, a survey was conducted on the level of tourists' satisfaction obtained from their visit and the destination's attributes. This allowed a better look and to identify the city's most valued characteristics by tourists. It is also possible to see whether the features promoted by local tourism authorities match the image perceived by tourists. In this survey on the satisfaction tourists got from visiting the destination, a special emphasis was given to satisfaction versus loyalty, as research has repeatedly underlined that enjoying a destination is not the same as wishing to repeat the visit (BIGNÉ et al., 2001; BOSQUE; MARTIN, 2008; NAM et al., 2011).

By addressing these issues, this paper aims to contribute to enhancing one's knowledge in relation to the differences between first time and repeat visitors with regards to the perceived attributes of cultural/heritage destinations, tourists' satisfaction and intention to return and to recommend a destination. With this in mind, and using Guimarães (Portugal) as the study case, the goal was to obtain confirmation or information on the results related to tourists' satisfaction towards a destination produced in previous empirical research.

Guimarães is a medium sized city located in the northwest of Portugal, with a rich historical centre and classified by UNESCO as a World Cultural Heritage site since 2001. It can also be said to be an emerging international tourist destination.

The data used are the result of a survey conducted to tourists by the municipality's tourism services, prepared in collaboration with the research team responsible for this paper. The data collected refer to the year of 2015.

The paper is laid out as follows: the first section includes a brief review of the literature on tourists' satisfaction, primarily addressing destinations with a strong cultural nature; the second

section contains the analytical methodology used and a short description of the city under analysis; the third section demonstrates the results of the empirical study conducted, followed by its discussion; finally, the last section comprises the conclusions and some policy recommendations, along with sharing the main limitations in the research undertaken.

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

Cultural tourism has been showing a relevant increase worldwide, being one of the fastest growing segments in the tourism activity. But what are tourists looking for in cultural destinations? They want to experience the historical, artistic, scientific or heritage aspects that a destination can offer them (SILBERBERG, 1995), as well as to benefit from deep cultural experiences (e.g., intellectual, emotional, aesthetic or psychological – STEBBINS, 1996).

Comparing to sea, sun and sand destinations or other types of mass tourism, tourists that visit cultural heritage sites are frequently trying to obtain value-added and authentic experiences (YANKHOLMES; AKYEAMPONG, 2010).

When someone decides to visit a cultural heritage destination, the main motivation usually derives from the place's heritage characteristics taking into account the perception of that person's own heritage. In fact, according to Poria et al. (2001), Chen and Chen (2010) and Remoaldo et al., (2014a), specifically, the motivation for visiting a destination of this kind is more focused on the tourists' own motivations and perceptions rather than on the specific attributes of that destination.

Looking at the sources of economic development of a territory, country or region, one always arrives at its resources and capabilities. The resources can be of different nature (physical, financial, human, cultural, technological, institutional), but the critical issue when looking at the development of a territory is its capabilities, that is, the ability to take advantage of its resourcefulness (CADIMA RIBEIRO; FREITAS SANTOS, 2008; CLARY, 2007; SANZ CAÑADA; MACIAS VÁZQUEZ, 2005; TREGEAR et al., 2007). In other words, what is being referred to is the ability a set of resources has in performing certain tasks or activities at its highest standards, given that economic activity requires both the cooperation and the coordination of a range of resources.

The resources can be both tangible and intangible and, as claimed, can be mobilized to increase a region's reputation and give it

a competitive advantage regarding certain products. The returns of a region's resources depend upon the ability of local firms to appropriately use the earnings collected and whether consumers value the characteristics that are associated with the product (CADIMA RIBEIRO; FREITAS SANTOS, 2008; TREGAR et al., 2007).

From what has just been mentioned, one can understand the critical role played by consumers' satisfaction during this path. The resources can be natural, cultural or of another nature, however, the products extracted from them need to be able to fulfil a particular consumers' need, and a certain enriched territory must be competitive with others who supply a similar portfolio of products. Even when dealing with cultural products and tourist destinations, the same issue remains.

In this respect, the main difference between common products and tourist ones has to do with their complex nature and the need to visit the place where the consumption of the product/service takes place (ALMEIDA, 2015; KASTENHOLZ, 2002; VANHOVE, 2004). Consumer behaviour is one of the most researched areas in the field of marketing and tourism, but there are still very few reviews in this area referring to this body of knowledge (COHEN et al., 2014). "Travel behaviour" or "Tourist behaviour" are the most commonly used terms to designate this research area. For decades, the motivations (ZIEGLER et al., 2012), image (GUZMAN-PARRA et al., 2016), satisfaction, loyalty and commitment have been some of the concepts under analysis (DIMANCHE, 1994) when dealing with such terms.

In the late seventies, the first authors that investigated the concept of tourist satisfaction with a destination area were Pizam and Reichel (1978), stating that it was a nebulous and inadequately operationalized concept, i.e., a rather complex measurement. Nowadays, research on travel behaviour is still fragmented into several aspects, since many studies investigate the same effect, such as the effect of loyalty satisfaction. Despite that, the results cannot be compared since there are differences "(...) in the research contexts based on tourist types or destinations, thereby hindering generalization (...)" (COHEN et al., 2014: 873).

Some authors define consumer satisfaction as a post consumption evaluation in which the option chosen either meets or exceeds the expectations (BEERLI; MARTIN, 2004). This reflects some pioneer statements from the late seventies highlighting that when the "(...) total weighed sum of experiences compared to the expectations results in a feeling of gratification, the tourist is satisfied; when the tourist's actual experiences compared with his expectations

results in a feeling of displeasure, they are said to be dissatisfied” (PIZAM; REICHEL, 1978: 315).

Addressing the complex nature of tourist products, Correia et al. (2013) have underlined that satisfaction largely depends on the set of attributes, such as the facilities, image and novelty, of the destination.

Also due to this, as emphasized by Carvalho et al. (2015), one may admit that the branding of places (tourist destinations) is different from the branding of its products, as places are vested with more complexity than single products.

Also of significant mention is the fact that, besides dealing with resources and products, the concept of attributes (tourist attributes) must be kept in mind, since these are the features of a product or service as perceived by the consumer (the tourist) (CARVALHO et al., 2015). It is necessary to bear in mind the complex nature of the tourist product, which increases the complexity of the competitive positioning of the destinations and their advertising and promotion.

Among the researchers that have touched on the issue of tourists’ satisfaction towards a destination or a tourist product, it is possible to find Oliver (1999), Bigné et al. (2001) and Bosque and Martin (2008). According to the first author (OLIVER, 1999), satisfaction relates to the way the consumer evaluates the consumption of a product or service, which keeps a close relation with the expected fulfilment of the product or service provision. In the same way, Antón et al. (2014) claim that satisfaction is related to the tourists’ expectations prior to taking their trip. Therefore, the study of tourists’ satisfaction is important both because having satisfied tourists is a step to getting them to return or to guarantee that information about the destination will be passed onto their family and friends, and also because it allows to identify how the destination’s attributes are perceived.

Even when dealing with a repeated experience, the level of satisfaction attained can only be evaluated after its consumption and is valid temporarily. The idea that satisfaction has to do with one’s consumption experience and the expectations held by the consumer was also underlined by Grönroos (2004), Yoon and Uysal (2005) and Bosque and Martin (2008).

Also addressing the theme of tourists’ satisfaction, Chi and Qu (2008), following a review of the available literature, have stressed that the image of the destination held by visitors will influence the process of choosing a destination and, moreover, that the image of the destination influences the perceived quality and satisfaction. This relationship between the image of the destination and tourists’



satisfaction was one of the hypotheses tested by Bosque and Martin (2008) in their structural equations model. In this case, the destination's image has not shown to significantly affect satisfaction.

In the case of Bigné et al. (2001), they centred their analysis on the relationship between the destination's image, based on the product attributes, quality, satisfaction and loyalty. From that perspective, and similarly to what was achieved by Antón et al. (2014), they concluded that the quality of the product or service delivered has a positive influence on one's satisfaction and on the intention of revisiting the destination. Even so, the relationship between satisfaction and the intention to return was considered not to have been demonstrated (BIGNÉ et al., 2001).

Regarding the importance of the attributes and characteristics, Chi and Qu (2008), from their empirical research, in line with what had been claimed by Oliver (1993), Antón et al. (2014) along with other authors, have concluded that significant and positive satisfaction with the attributes influence overall contentment. They use the expression "it can be said that tourists' overall satisfaction was determined by the destination's image and attribute satisfaction" (CHI; QU, 2008, p. 632), adding that attribute satisfaction has also shown to be a precursor of destination loyalty. In turn, Guzman-Parra et al. (2016), following Geng-Qing and Qu (2008), stated that the destination's image is a precursor of satisfaction.

Not surprisingly, they (CHI; QU, 2008) also concluded that satisfaction directly and positively affects destination loyalty, which is in line with previous evidence (see, for example, YOON, & UYSAL, 2005). Satisfied tourists are more likely to repeat visits (CAMPO-MARTÍNEZ et al., 2010) and, moreover, share their positive experience with family and friends (BAKER, & CROMPTON, 2000). The authors Geng-Qing and Qu (2008), referring to the same topic, claimed that satisfaction has a positive influence on destination loyalty (GENG-QING; QU, 2008). In parallel, Bosque and Martin (2008) found that satisfaction has a positive and significant impact on loyalty, while adding that expectations and loyalty are influenced by the preconceived image of the destination.

With regards to the intention of returning to a certain destination, it is relevant to mention that Nam et al. (2011) 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 return to it. Explaining their reasoning on the topic, they distinguish among behavioural loyalty and psychological commitment, emphasizing that the first one (behavioural loyalty) is more

appropriate to approach consumer loyalty in the tourism industry. Identically, Yoon and Uysal (2005) admit that tourists' loyalty to products or destinations may not be enough for them to return or recommend the products or places to family and friends.

The distinction between behavioural loyalty, associated to repeating a purchase, and attitudinal loyalty, linked to recommending a destination and revisiting it, can also be found in studies conducted by Oppermann (2000), Barroso et al. (2007) and by Chen and Tsai (2007).

As shown by the results from previous research performed on and in relation to tourists' satisfaction towards Guimarães (REMOALDO et al., 2014), the issue of satisfaction versus loyalty is surely one deserving a particular reflection in terms of the empirical approach to be performed throughout this paper.

## **Analytical methodology and brief presentation of the destination**

### *Analytical methodology*

As referred to in the introduction, the data used came from a survey conducted by the municipality's tourism services on tourists visiting Guimarães. The questionnaire was prepared by the municipality in collaboration with the research team responsible for this paper, and corresponded to an update of the one used in 2010/2011 and 2012 by the same research team and on the same destination. A total of 325 completed questionnaires were collected until the end of 2015 and 322 were analysed for this paper (3 visitors did not identify whether it was their first visit or a repeated visit to Guimarães so, for this reason, these 3 questionnaires were not considered for further analysis).

The number of questionnaires collected was greater than the average number used in several other similar investigations (e.g., PORIA et al., 2006; YANKHOLMES; AKYEAMPONG, 2010). The first research mentioned 205 interviews conducted at a known historical site (Anne Frank House in Amsterdam, the Netherlands), whilst in the second a total of 218 questionnaires were applied at another heritage site (Danish-Osu, Ghana).

The results presented in this paper are a first outlook at the topic at hand, using the mentioned data.

Taking advantage of the survey data, the methodology used in the empirical study is of a quantitative nature, expressing and attempting to determine the level of satisfaction tourists obtain from

visiting the chosen tourism destination as a main focus of this analysis, always bearing in mind its attributes. Therefore, a special look is taken at satisfaction versus loyalty, in relation to the city being capable of captivating repeated visits or not.

The questionnaire applied included a total of 22 questions, most of them being categorized and closed, and both Portuguese and English versions were available for visitors. Before its application, a pre-test was conducted, allowing to adjust some of the questions, applying a language that would be better understood by eventual respondents and verifying the time needed for the survey to be fully answered. The place chosen to apply the survey was the tourism office in the city of Guimarães, meaning that the respondents had full support in its completion (as it was self-administrated) from the staff of the office.

The survey included three main parts: one relating to the destination's visit and the motivation behind it; a second part where tourists were invited to express their opinion towards the city's attributes and the level of satisfaction they received from the visit. Additionally, they were invited to share their intention of returning or of recommending the visit to family and friends (the identification of the reason for choosing the destination was also previously inquired in this section); the third part inquired visitors about their socio-demographic features (gender, age, level of education, residence, marital status and income level).

In the question about the destination's attributes, a five points Likert scale was used in which 1 represents total disagreement and 5 represents total agreement. In this research, bearing in mind the research topic identified, only a few of the questions included in the survey are analysed.

In addition, using descriptive statistics, chi-square tests and *t* tests are used in the analysis to check the statistical significance of the results achieved.

#### *Brief presentation of the destination*

Guimarães is a small middle sized city located in the Ave Valley, in the northwest of Portugal. With its distinctive 10<sup>th</sup>-century castle, it is considered the birthplace of the Portuguese nation. The city has many traditional buildings from the 15<sup>th</sup> to the 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, which was one of the characteristics that made its certification by UNESCO as a World Heritage Site in December 2001 possible.

For centuries, the Ave Valley has been an industrial district, with a strong economic background constituted by traditional

manufacturing activities, such as textiles, clothing and footwear. The recently developed tourist industry has played a complementary role in its economy during the last fifteen years.

Geographical, the city has a central location, only 50 km away from Oporto and even less from the Oporto airport, the main aerial entrance for visitors in the north of Portugal. Hosting the 2012 European Capital of Culture and its certification by UNESCO have promoted its external visibility.

Since 2000, Guimarães has experienced a sustainable increase in the number of visitors, with a total of 70,075 in 2009, according to data collected by the city's tourism offices. According to the same source, invoked by the Universidade do Minho (2013) and Remoaldo et al. (2014a), with the hosting of the 2012 European Capital of Culture, the city experienced a peak in the number of tourists, which fell in the years following the event, contrary to the sustainable growth trend felt from previous years.

Despite the increasing number of visitors, the average stay for tourists continues to be quite low (less than 2.0 nights, according to national data statistics, much lower than Portugal's mainland average – which is over 3 nights). With regards to the proportion of tourists, Guimarães also falls below the national average with visitors mostly coming from European Union countries: where apart from Portugal, Spain, France and Germany are the main tourist sources (UNIVERSIDADE DO MINHO, 2013; REMOALDO et al., 2014a).

## **Empirical results and discussion**

As expressed, the data considered in the empirical approach were collected using a survey conducted to tourists that visited Guimarães during 2015. The results presented in this paper are a partial exploration of those data.

Table 1 refers to the socio-demographic profile of the survey's respondents, where it was decided that the organization would differentiate first time visits to repeated ones. On this basis, the chi-square test was used to identify structural changes in the visitor's profile, that is, newcomers in comparison to those returning to the destination.

As can be observed in Table 1, the visitor's profile is structured around an even number of males and females, from 26 to 65 years of age (86.6%), with a high level of education (those with a university degree plus those with a Master's or PhD degree accounted for 63.5%), married (65.2%), and mostly foreigners (84.7%).

Considering that the sample used by Remoaldo et al. (2014b) in a previous study about Guimarães as a destination referred to the period between 2010/2011, it can be concluded that both the amount of female tourists and the visitors with age between 0 and 25 were higher than in the present sample. Previously, according to the same research (REMOALDO et al., 2014b), tourists were also more educated. This allows conclude that a change in the tourists profile did occur. As a matter of fact, the destination is currently receiving older tourists, which seems to show that the older visitors' segments show a more favourable perception of the destination. Their typical greater financial availability and a more demanding profile in terms of the quality of the destination raises new demands that destination managers should take in to account.

Looking at whether it is an issue of being a 1<sup>st</sup> time or a repeated visit, the most remarkable features are the major differences detected regarding education and residence, as shown in the chi-square test. In relation to education, results show that 1<sup>st</sup> time visitors are holders of higher levels of education compared to those returning to the destination, which may be due to the improvement of the destination's cultural profile. Regarding the respondent's residence, the relatively high amount of foreigners amongst Guimarães' visitors is quite remarkable. This happens perhaps because individuals from other countries need more information than Portuguese visitors, besides what they can find available on the Internet. On the other hand, Portuguese tourists tend to repeat the visit more than foreigners do. Perhaps, Guimarães' current high accessibility level (by highways and train) makes it more attractive to Portuguese visitors. The new cultural facilities and those resulting from hosting the European Capital of Culture in 2012 may also help in explaining the results obtained.

**Table 1: Some respondents' characteristics**

|                   | 1st visit      |                 | Repeat        |                 | Total          |                | X <sup>2</sup> | Sig.       |
|-------------------|----------------|-----------------|---------------|-----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|------------|
|                   | N<br>(250<br>) | %<br>(77.6<br>) | N<br>(72<br>) | %<br>(22.4<br>) | N<br>(322<br>) | %<br>(100<br>) |                |            |
| Gender            |                |                 |               |                 |                |                | 0.284          | 0.594      |
| Male              | 120            | 48.0            | 32            | 44.4            | 152            | 47.2           |                |            |
| Female            | 130            | 52.0            | 40            | 55.6            | 170            | 52.8           |                |            |
| Age               |                |                 |               |                 |                |                | 3.158          | 0.318      |
| 0-25              | 16             | 6.4             | 6             | 8.5             | 22             | 6.9            |                |            |
| 26-45             | 127            | 50.8            | 28            | 39.4            | 155            | 48.3           |                |            |
| 46-65             | 90             | 36.0            | 33            | 46.5            | 123            | 38.3           |                |            |
| More than 65      | 17             | 6.8             | 4             | 5.6             | 21             | 6.8            |                |            |
| Education         |                |                 |               |                 |                |                | 21.59<br>1     | 0.000<br>* |
| Basic             | 14             | 5.6             | 14            | 19.4            | 28             | 8.7            |                |            |
| Secondary         | 62             | 24.9            | 27            | 37.5            | 89             | 27.7           |                |            |
| University        | 103            | 41.4            | 19            | 26.4            | 122            | 38.0           |                |            |
| Masters/Doctorate | 70             | 28.1            | 12            | 16.7            | 82             | 25.5           |                |            |
| Marital status    |                |                 |               |                 |                |                | 2.187          | 0.534      |
| Single            | 58             | 24.3            | 12            | 18.2            | 70             | 23.0           |                |            |
| Married           | 151            | 63.2            | 48            | 72.7            | 199            | 65.2           |                |            |
| Divorced/Widow    | 30             | 12.5            | 6             | 9.1             | 36             | 11.8           |                |            |
| Residence         |                |                 |               |                 |                |                | 54.42<br>2     | 0.000<br>* |
| Portugal          | 19             | 7.6             | 30            | 42.9            | 49             | 15.3           |                |            |
| Foreigner         | 231            | 92.4            | 40            | 57.1            | 271            | 84.7           |                |            |

Source: authors' own survey data.

\* indicated  $p < 0.01$ 

This amount of foreigners amongst visitors may also be seen as an effect of the international visibility of the destination in recent years.

In order to obtain information on the major destinations included in the tourist's trip, respondents were asked which destinations they had visited or planned on visiting (Table 2) during their trip.

Oporto (53 km away from Guimarães and the main city in the Northern Region of Portugal) emerged as the main destination for first time visitors to Guimarães (indicated by 74% of the respondents). For second time visitors, Guimarães appeared as the main destination for 72% of respondents. The main circuit included Oporto-Guimarães-Braga (this last city is 25 km away from Guimarães and 45 from Oporto) being that the number of visitors choosing this circuit is statistically higher among first time visitors. This fits into one of the Northern Region's tourist segment characteristics – i.e, cultural touring. This strengthening of Guimarães as the main destination may also be seen as a result of the high reputation acquired by Guimarães as a regional destination along the given period.

**Table 2.** Other cities tourists visited or planned on visiting

|                              | 1st visit |      | Repeat |      | X2    | Sig.    |
|------------------------------|-----------|------|--------|------|-------|---------|
|                              | N         | %    | N      | %    |       |         |
| Guimarães (main destination) | 132       | 52.8 | 52     | 72.2 | 8.611 | 0.003*  |
| Braga                        | 124       | 49.6 | 25     | 34.7 | 4.977 | 0.032** |
| Oporto                       | 185       | 74.0 | 40     | 55.6 | 9.035 | 0.004*  |
| Viana do Castelo             | 40        | 16.0 | 12     | 16.7 | 0.018 | 0.858   |
| Douro                        | 40        | 16.0 | 11     | 15.3 | 0.022 | 1.000   |
| Others                       | 43        | 17.2 | 4      | 5.6  | 6.080 | 0.013** |

Source: authors' own survey data.

\* indicated  $p < 0.01$

\*\*  $p < 0.05$

Before addressing the topic of the tourist's perceived characteristics of Guimarães, it is worth mentioning a few words about the motivations behind the choice of their destination. This is important since it is a key component and a driving force when considering tourist's behaviour (CROMPTON, 1979; ZIEGLER et al., 2012).

According to Table 3, the choice of Guimarães was mainly due to it being part of a tour of the cities in the "region" (Touring, visiting cities in the region), mentioned by 66.5% of the respondents. Then, as a result of it being a World Heritage Site, with its Architectural Heritage coming in third place, relating closely to the second reason, confirming the importance a destination's cultural patrimony has in attracting and captivating visitors. Not far from the third place comes enjoying the Cultural Activities organized by the city, together with the fact of it having hosted the 2012 European Capital of Culture.

All this considered, it may be said that a cultural motivation behind the choice of the destination is evident, meaning that the image

held of the city is largely associated with its cultural attributes. Therefore, there may be leeway to believe that one is, in large amount, dealing with cultural tourism. Of course, leisure and educational experiences do not need to be looked at as opposing sides of a tourist visit. Taking advantage of both is probably the best asset visitors can get if the destination is able to supply them with such a set of products. When a tourist destination satisfies its visitors, it has the chance to sell them the same service or other similar services in the future and, thus, achieve a better position in the tourism market. Of course, destination planners/ marketers and promoters need to have a solid and clear idea of the market segment they want to be positioned in.

**Table 3:** Tourists' motivations

|   | 1st visit |      | Repeat |      | Total |      | X2     | Sig.    |
|---|-----------|------|--------|------|-------|------|--------|---------|
|   | N         | %    | N      | %    | N     | %    |        |         |
| 1. Being World Heritage Site              | 159       | 63.6 | 44     | 61.1 | 203   | 63.0 | 0.149  | 0.700   |
| 2. Touring, visiting cities in the region | 179       | 71.6 | 35     | 48.6 | 214   | 66.5 | 13.253 | 0.000*  |
| 3. Business                               | 16        | 6.4  | 8      | 11.1 | 24    | 7.5  | 1.799  | 0.180   |
| 4. Religious motivation                   | 25        | 10.0 | 18     | 25.0 | 43    | 13.4 | 10.870 | 0.001*  |
| 5. Gastronomy and wines                   | 68        | 27.2 | 39     | 54.2 | 107   | 33.2 | 18.321 | 0.000*  |
| 6. Conferences and seminars               | 13        | 5.2  | 8      | 11.1 | 21    | 6.5  | 3.204  | 0.073   |
| 7. Cultural activities                    | 104       | 41.6 | 24     | 33.3 | 128   | 39.8 | 1.595  | 0.207   |
| 8. Sports events                          | 14        | 5.6  | 8      | 11.1 | 22    | 6.8  | 2.667  | 0.102   |
| 9. Visiting family and friends            | 39        | 15.6 | 20     | 27.8 | 59    | 18.3 | 5.539  | 0.019** |
| 10. European Capital of Culture 2012      | 85        | 34.0 | 24     | 33.3 | 109   | 33.9 | 0.011  | 0.916   |
| 11. Architectural heritage                | 107       | 42.8 | 29     | 40.3 | 136   | 42.2 | 0.148  | 0.703   |

Source: authors' own survey data.

\* indicated  $p < 0.01$

\*\* indicated  $p < 0.05$

Looking again at the segmentation found between first time visitors and repeating ones, it is worth emphasizing the importance Gastronomy and Wines seem to have for those returning to the destination, as depicted by the chi-square statistics, and, in a far behind second and third places, Visit to Family and Friends (these being in some cases Portuguese immigrants) and Religious Motivation. Contrary to this situation, that is, the reason for first time visitors and what distinguishes them from repeating visitors, comes Touring - Visiting Cities in the Region.

Of course, the motivation behind someone's choice of a destination has a close relationship with their personal preferences, that is, the kind of tourist experience they want to try, and, thus, the perceived attributes of the elected place (ANTÓN et al., 2014; BOSQUES; MARTÍN, 2008; GRÖNROOS, 2004; YOON; UYSAL, 2005).



In this regard, it is useful to keep in mind that tourists' satisfaction is closely related with the perceived attributes of the destination or, putting it another way, with the overall assessment the tourist makes of the quality of the service provided, compared to the expected service (ANTÓN et al., 2014; GENG-QING; QU, 2008).

In the second part of the questionnaire, tourists were asked to what extent they agreed/disagreed with the characteristics and attributes of the city based on the five-point Likert scale (1= total disagreement to 5= full agreement). Table 4 refers to the rank of Guimarães' perceived attributes according to both first time visitors and those repeating the visit to the city.

Generally speaking, a noticeable difference in the way both groups rank the destination's perceived attributes could not be found. Even so, a few differences do exist, being worth mentioning those where a statistical difference could be found, namely the attributes of 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 had been there before. This said, one can conclude from these results that the destination is perceived to have much more to offer than initially believed by first time visitors.

**Table 4: Guimarães' perceived attributes**

|   | 1st visit |            |       | Repeat |            |       | t-value | Sig.    |
|---|-----------|------------|-------|--------|------------|-------|---------|---------|
|   | Rank      | Mean score | SD    | Rank   | Mean score | SD    |         |         |
| Cleanliness of places visited                         | 1         | 4.46       | 0.734 | 1      | 4.54       | 0.730 | -0.792  | 0.429   |
| Good rehabilitation of Historical Centre              | 2         | 4.44       | 0.657 | 1      | 4.54       | 0.604 | -1.224  | 0.222   |
| Relevant, artistic and monumental heritage            | 3         | 4.41       | 0.672 | 3      | 4.44       | 0.710 | -0.356  | 0.722   |
| Welcoming city  | 4         | 4.40       | 0.728 | 2      | 4.50       | 0.650 | -1.094  | 0.275   |
| Safe city   | 5         | 4.17       | 0.840 | 3      | 4.44       | 0.710 | -2.506  | 0.013** |
| Linked to the origin of the Portuguese nationality    | 6         | 4.15       | 0.869 | 5      | 4.36       | 0.877 | -1.795  | 0.074   |
| Professionalism in service delivery                   | 6         | 4.15       | 0.770 | 6      | 4.35       | 0.715 | -1.965  | 0.050   |
| Good value for money in services                      | 7         | 4.05       | 0.797 | 8      | 4.18       | 0.718 | -1.231  | 0.219   |
| Quality and diversity of restaurants and coffee shops | 8         | 3.95       | 0.759 | 7      | 4.22       | 0.892 | -2.339  | 0.021** |
| Good signage and tourist information                  | 9         | 3.91       | 0.936 | 9      | 4.00       | 0.934 | -0.703  | 0.482   |
| Good gastronomy                                       | 10        | 3.90       | 0.829 | 4      | 4.37       | 0.721 | -4.440  | 0.000*  |
| Quality and diversity of general shops                | 11        | 3.74       | 0.754 | 11     | 3.97       | 0.919 | -2.150  | 0.032** |
| Good dissemination of cultural events                 | 12        | 3.70       | 0.793 | 15     | 3.81       | 0.944 | -0.865  | 0.389   |
| Quality hotels  | 13        | 3.68       | 0.736 | 9      | 4.00       | 0.822 | -3.205  | 0.001*  |
| Good transport services                               | 14        | 3.64       | 0.800 | 14     | 3.85       | 0.799 | -1.900  | 0.058   |
| Good range of entertainment in terms of quantity      | 15        | 3.60       | 0.766 | 13     | 3.90       | 0.922 | -2.579  | 0.011** |
| Good range of entertainment in terms of quality       | 16        | 3.59       | 0.778 | 12     | 3.96       | 0.895 | -3.439  | 0.001*  |
| Good shopping opportunities                           | 17        | 3.58       | 0.819 | 10     | 3.99       | 0.942 | -3.582  | 0.000*  |

Source: authors' own survey data.

SD = standard deviation.

\* indicated  $p < 0.01$ \*\* indicated  $p < 0.05$ 

Analysing the reasons behind a second or a third visit to a specific destination, we come to the topic of tourists' satisfaction towards products or services that they can benefit from and/or the experience they may have with them. Table 5 addresses this topic.

**Table 5: Satisfaction and recommendation**

|  | 1st visit<br>(N=250)      |                   | Repeat<br>(N=72)          |                                | t-value | Sig.   |
|--|---------------------------|-------------------|---------------------------|--------------------------------|---------|--------|
|  | Agree<br>(%) <sup>1</sup> | Average<br>scores | Agree<br>(%) <sup>1</sup> | Average<br>scores <sup>2</sup> |         |        |
| Global quality of the destination <sup>2</sup>                   | 91.2                      | 4.26              | 98.6                      | 4.56                           | -3.796  | 0.000* |
| Satisfaction felt with the holidays<br>to Guimarães <sup>3</sup> | 92.4                      | 4.33              | 98.6                      | 4.58                           | -3.110  | 0.002* |
| Will return <sup>4</sup>   | 35.5                      | 3.18              | 51.4                      | 4.01                           | -5.366  | 0.000* |
| Recommendation to family and friends <sup>5</sup>                | 92.0                      | 4.48              | 84.5                      | 4.48                           | -0.030  | 0.976  |

Source: authors' own survey data.

Notes: <sup>1</sup> percentage of respondents who agree having 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% chance to 5=100% chance; <sup>5</sup> scale ranges from 1= does not recommend to 5=strongly recommend.

\* indicated  $p < 0.01$

From a first look at the table (Table 5), what seems to be most impressive is the evident contrast between the Overall Satisfaction experienced with the Holidays in Guimarães, along with the strong will to recommend its visit to relatives and friends (Recommendation to Family and Friends) and the intention to return (Will Return). In this regard, the findings in the literature provide suitable explanations to understand that enjoying a destination and repeating the visit are not the same (NAM et al., 2011; YOON; UYSAL, 2005).

In their approach to this issue with focus on the same destination, Remoaldo et al. (2014a) related this with the (small-medium) size of the city, expressed in the set of tourist products perceived by visitors at a first glance. This interpretation is consistent with the different results obtained from first time visitors and repeating visitors (Table 5), which show statistical significance in all items except in one - Recommendation to Family and Friends - where both groups converge to express a very positive attitude. The level of agreement expressed by returning tourists on the Global Quality of the Destination and on the Satisfaction with their Holidays in Guimarães is also consistent with this interpretation.

The results gathered in terms of the stated overall satisfaction are in line with those achieved for the attributes satisfaction, also in agreement with the findings of Chi and Qu (2008) and Geng-Qing and Qu (2008), who claimed that attribute satisfaction can be understood as a precursor of destination loyalty. In turn, observing the high level of satisfaction cited by respondents along with the intention to repeat the

visit to the destination, it may be said that, following the thoughts of Nam et al. (2011) and Yoon and Uysal (2005), behavioural loyalty and psychological commitment appear to be different, being that behavioural loyalty seems more appropriate to refer to consumer loyalty in the tourism industry.

As a final comment on the results shown in Table 5, recalling the behavioural differences stated in both types of visitors, the main idea that comes to mind is that the quality of the product or service supplied has in fact a positive influence on the tourists' level of satisfaction and on their intention to repeat the visit or not, as assumed by authors such as Bigné et al. (2001), and Yoon and Uysal (2005). This is also in line with the empirical results obtained by Bosques and Martín (2008) and Guzman-Parra et al. (2016) regarding previously studied Spanish destinations.

All in all, it is believed that, even though the destination continues to perform well, it suffers from not having a consolidated image on the tourist market and, almost certainly, from not being able to adequately advertise the products and services it can and has to provide its visitors. In relation to the destination's promotion, a matter of budget stands out, together with the national tourism strategy, which have led to its limitation. With reference to the national tourism strategy, it is important to mention that more emphasis has been put on the promotion of other products and destinations, namely the more traditional ones such as the Algarve, Lisbon, Madeira and Oporto (that in 2014 was recognized as Best European Destination). This last one is the main destination in the Northern region where Guimarães is located, and belongs to the same touristic region.

## **Conclusions and recommendations**

This study focuses on Guimarães as a cultural destination. Two main objectives were defined: first, to secure a picture of the destination's perceived tourist attributes, this way, obtaining indirectly a profile of its visitors; and second, to understand the level of satisfaction tourists received from the visit. When inquiring about the satisfaction tourists received from visiting the destination, special emphasis was put on satisfaction versus loyalty. All these analyses were made considering first time visitors versus recurring visitors.

Hence, a close look at the tourists' most valued city attributes along with and their overall satisfaction was attempted, providing tourism authorities with information that may be used to adjust tourist planning and the promotion of the city.

The empirical research revealed that visitors to Guimarães are of both sexes, between 26 and 65 years of age, with a high-education level and married. Additionally, first time tourists have a higher education level than recurring tourists, and Portuguese visitors tend to return more often than foreigners.

Looking at the motivations behind tourists' choice of destination, and taking into account the whole sample, the choice for Guimarães proved to be, first, it being part of a tour around the "region's cities"; being a World Heritage Site coming in second; and third the city's Architectural Heritage. Closely behind the third reason comes having hosted the 2012 European Capital of Culture, together with the idea of taking advantage of the Cultural Activities available. Given this, it can be said that visitors are mostly driven by cultural motivations.

Taking a look at the segmentation between tourists visiting the destination for the first time and repeating ones, the importance that Gastronomy and Wines seem to have to those who return to the destination is noticeable, while Touring is by a fair distance from any other, the main motivation for first time visitors. Could it be said that these latter ones, who are mostly foreigners touring the region in order to get a first feel of the cities (namely, Oporto, Braga and Guimarães) of the northern region do not see any advantage in returning to Guimarães when comparing it to the other Portuguese destinations visited? If so, what could be missing in order to encourage a second or third visit? In future surveys to be conducted in Guimarães, the increase in visitors to Guimarães can be compared with other cities in the region that are visited during the same holiday trip. This may help local authorities to improve the city's image.

The comparison of the mean scores of Guimarães' attributes between first time visitors and repeated visitors revealed that a market difference was not found in the way both groups rank the destination's perceived attributes. However, repeated visitors held higher averages in all attributes. T-test results indicated that the differences were statistically significant regarding 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 relation to satisfaction, both first time and repeated visitors, and according to their responses, conveyed a high level of overall satisfaction towards visiting the destination. Meanwhile, looking at their intention to return, the main conclusion is that the quality of the product or service supplied does has a positive influence on

satisfaction and on the intention to repeat the visit. However, this is not enough to explain it (that is, to guarantee it), a result which is in line with the findings in the empirical literature on the issue.

Having concluded that visitors highly expressed their satisfaction with their visit to the destination at hand, the opportunity arises for a far more in depth analysis on the reasons behind their satisfaction and motivations for the visit in relation to the city's attributes.

Correlating the results found and the policy recommendations drawn from them, it is believed that the destination may be suffering from not having a consolidated image in the tourism market and not being able to adequately advertise the products and services it has to offer its visitors. However, given the circumstances, it is plausible to state that the city is performing well. The advertising factor is related not only with budget constraints, but also with options made at a national level, where greater emphasis has been put on the promotion of other products, services and destinations. These promotion efforts succeeded in increasing the number of tourists to another of the region's cities - Oporto (53 km from Guimarães) - in the last years, known as a city-break product and classified three times (the last in 2017) as Best European Destination. However, it is time to convince tourists to stay longer in the northern region and to visit Guimarães, as Oporto is starting to become a saturated destination. Perhaps its gastronomy and wines could be considered a good solution, given that Portuguese tourists visit it more in search of these attribute, and since Guimarães is included the Vinho Verde Routes. Possibly foreigners do not know about the eight existing routes regarding Vinho Verde (literally, Green Wine) and that Guimarães is included in two of them. Maybe foreigners are still more attached to the traditional wines of Portugal, such as Oporto wine. If so, new promoting strategies should be developed and used abroad.

Recognizing the results obtained on the perceived attributes of the city, along with those regarding the intention to return, as stated by first time visitors, it conveys the impression that the communication strategy may need some working on. Without disregarding the financial constraints and maintaining the focus on the cultural/heritage tourist segment, the strategy adopted should aim at and be capable of showing that the city has more to offer than just its architectural heritage; such as offering visitors authentic and singular experiences, either through its cultural shows and traditional festivities or its nourishing, bountiful and rich gastronomy. If tourists can be attracted and captivated by the attributes and emotions a

destination can provide, given that both are crucial for their fulfilment (satisfaction), then there is a path that can be taken to improve their satisfaction and loyalty, even if, as according to the survey data, little more needs to be done in terms of satisfaction towards their visit to the destination in question.

The results presented throughout this paper are a first outlook of the research subject chosen and a partial exploration of the data collected via a survey conducted in 2015.

The effectiveness of the sample may be put into question given that the amount of foreign visitors was greater than initially expected, comparing to previous data on the destination's visitors. This biased sample is a consequence of having opted for the implementation of the survey at the Guimarães tourist offices, a place Portuguese visitors naturally visit a lot less than foreign ones. Nevertheless, since we are talking about an emergent international destination, it is crucial to know the motivations and evaluations of visitors from other countries. When someone goes to a tourist information office, they expect to receive some added information about the destination, and in turn is more prone to spending extra time in the office. They are also more available and likely to answer a survey, since they can identify the people performing the survey and may assume that their role in participating may aid and be important for the planning and improvement of local tourist activities.

In future surveys, one may reflect upon why tourists visited Guimarães. Was it because they could take advantage of low cost packages included in the visit to Oporto? Finally, this type of investigation can also be complemented with the level of satisfaction expressed on TripAdvisor, for instance. This high amount of data is starting to become an important source of information that can be used along with the surveys performed.

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