

**9th Annual International Religious Tourism and Pilgrimage Conference:  
Religious Tourism & The Azorean Diaspora in the USA**

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## **Biographies**

**Cristina Carvalho** has a Ph.D in History, a masters in English Studies and a graduate degree in Tourism Information. She teaches at the Estoril Higher Institute for Tourism and Hotel Studies (ESHTE), having articles on Tourism History, Tourism Information, and Leisure published at national and international levels.

**Vitor Ambrósio** Ph.D., has been teaching at Estoril Higher Institute for Tourism and Hotel Studies, since 1991. He also teaches in several Master and Doctoral programs from other Institutions. Prior to this he had worked as a travel agent promoter and tourist guide. His main research interest is Religious Tourism.

## **Abstract**

The article focuses on the Azorean diaspora in North America in historic and cultural terms. The analysis of official tourist reports and inquiries, newspaper articles and Online sources allow us to perceive which generations preserve the religious factor as pivotal for the attendance of the events, and which one/s already reveal shifting trends.

Religion is still an important element to summon the Azorean diaspora spread across the USA. The *Ecce Homo* procession is celebrated in towns like Fall River (Massachusetts) and Half Moon Bay (California), although Ponta Delgada (São Miguel island) still remains the devotional core – the former and the latter have been sister cities for decades. Also the Holy Ghost festival is pivotal both in Fall River and across Terceira island (Leal, 2005).

Observation shows that while the older generations maintain their religious and emotional bonds to the family core in the Azores, the younger ones present a different tourist behaviour in terms of travel and accommodation patterns (ORT/CESTUR, 2009).

## **Introduction**

The Azores are a Portuguese archipelago located half-way between Europe and North America and its waters attracted American whaling ships since the mid-18th century, which also enabled many natives to migrate to the USA since then. Shortly after arriving they gathered in closely-knit communities and formed brotherhoods to retain and honor homeland Christian cults (Williams,

2007). They also founded newspapers, parishes and cultural associations of their own language, devotions and interests.

Speaking of tourism, religion keeps on being an important element to glue the Azorean Diaspora spread across North America. Although the main Azorean religious festivities were replicated in North American towns like Fall River (Massachusetts) and Half Moon Bay (California) the experience of living them in the homeland (or in the land of their ancestors) is unique/distinctive. In São Miguel island (the archipelago's main island) the Azorean living overseas gather in Ponta Delgada (the capital city) for the *Ecce Homo* procession or come for the Lent Pilgrimages - in the latter more men than women join it once ladies are not allowed to incorporate that eight days' pilgrimage around the island (Ambrósio, 2011). Also in Terceira island (the second most populated in the archipelago) many Azorean meet for the Holy Ghost festival.

However, while the first generation and sometimes the second generation of emigrants maintain their religious and emotional connections to the family core in the Azores, recent developments in terms of travel and accommodation patterns prove the third and fourth generations reveal a different tourist behaviour.

The perception of those changes by the governmental and tourism regional authorities has raised voices on behalf of strengthening the promotion of the archipelago's cultural and natural treasures amongst the younger generations.

## **Literature Review**

This paper starts by revising literature on religious events that lead emigrants to return to their countries on specific months.

After having considered the general issues about the tourist movements/consumptions based in trips to attend their cultural religious traditions the literature review focused on the Azorean diaspora and how particular religious' ceremonies attract emigrants to travel back to their origins (Leal, 2005 and William, 2007).

Selected data from an important survey to tourists during the *Ecce Homo* festivities, in 2009 (since then no other relevant study about this subject took place), helped to analyse the feelings/emotional

state and behaviours of the different diaspora's generations towards the most important Azorean religious festivity (ORT/CESTUR, 2009).

## **Methodology**

In this paper the literature review was an important step to understand how the diaspora behaves in travelling regularly back to their countries of origin motivated by religious events.

Also the data related to the Azorean living abroad (mainly in North America), provided in the study/report about the *Ecce Homo* Festivity (the one which attracts more emigrants) was crucial to figure out the distinctive behaviours revealed among the different diaspora generations.

Another important issue to refer is that one of the article's authors was the coordinator of the already mentioned survey. His experience in interviewing the emigrants/tourists who attended that religious ceremony (the survey was led as a semi-interview) contributed a lot for the final reflexions.

The conclusions/advises to strengthen the promotion of the archipelago's cultural and natural treasures amongst the diaspora, which is the result of the crossed elements' analysis.

## **Results**

Speaking of tourism, religion is still an important element to summon the Azorean diaspora spread across North America. It might happen in the United States, being the best examples Fall River (Massachusetts) and Half Moon Bay (California), but experiencing those ceremonies in their country (or their ascendants country) is far more exceptional.

While the older generations maintain their religious and emotional bonds to the family core in the Azores, recent developments in terms of travel and accommodation patterns prove the younger present a different tourist behaviour. When the first generation travels to the islands they almost always stay in their relatives' homes (mainly if theirs parents are still alive). The second generation generally does the same while being accompanied by the first generation, preferring hotels if when travelling alone. The third and fourth generations rarely speak Portuguese and stay in hotels,

sometimes they reserve a few hours for visiting the places where their ancestors were born and eventually for exchanging a few words with distant cousins who have never left the island.

As the diaspora is very important for the Azorean tourism, their motivations and behaviours should be monitored bearing in mind that generations act differently. Although the governmental and regional tourist authorities have that perception not much has been done apart from a study led by the Regional Tourism Observatory, already in 2009.

In this article, the literature review about this subject, the analysis of official tourist reports and inquiries, newspaper articles and Online sources allow to perceive which generations preserve the religious factor as pivotal for the attendance of the events, and which ones already reveal shifting trends.

The article will contribute for the necessary reflection which has to be done considering the implementation of new marketing actions/strategies within the Azorean diaspora in North America keeping in mind its different generations' motivations and behaviours.

## **Conclusion and Discussion**

In the emigration's phenomenon, the first generation tends to keep very strong ties with its country of origin, namely by respecting and being committed with their religious practices.

The second generation tends to strengthen the bonds with the country where they were born while simultaneously loosening the bonds with their parents' homeland.

In the third and fourth generations, the domain of the first generation's national language is usually (almost) lost (in this case, Portuguese) and the respect payed to the traditions (like particular religious' ceremonies) nearly disappears. Travelling to the land of their ancestors is often motivated by a certain nostalgia that might be reinforced by the fact of having such territory become a fashionable tourism destination.

The current study tries to grasp the changes observed in the diaspora behaviours having in mind its different generations and how the regional authorities and tourism agents should raise voices

on behalf of strengthening the promotion of the archipelago's cultural and natural treasures amongst the diaspora, mainly amongst its Millennials.

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