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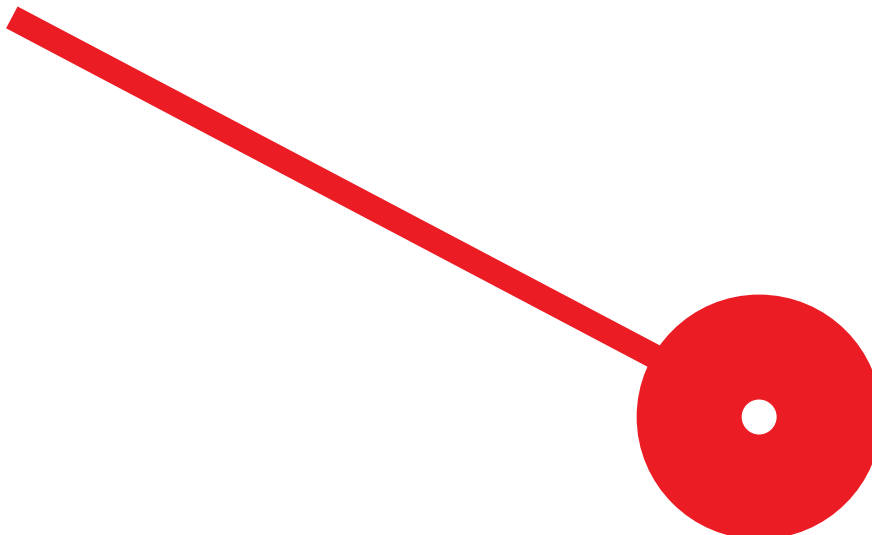
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Mestrado Estudos Interculturais para o Negócio

Working In a Tourism Company: Experience at Dixo's Oporto Apartments

João Afonso Piano Borges de Brito

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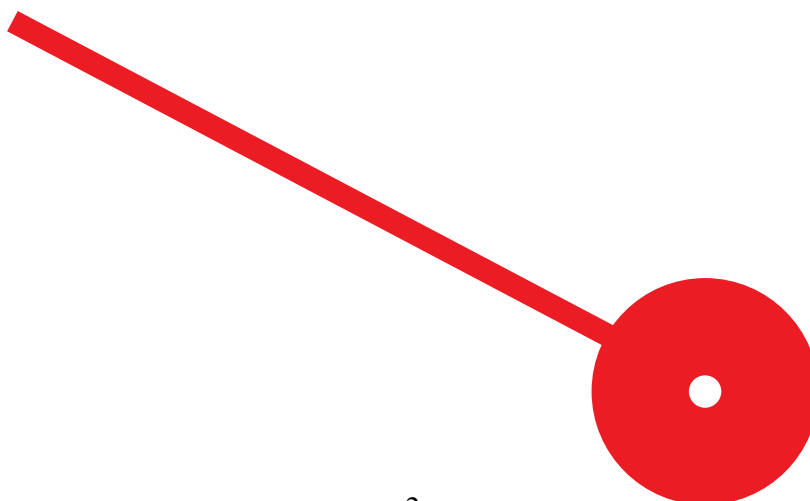
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João Afonso Piano Borges de Brito

Dissertação de Relatório de Estágio apresentado ao Instituto Superior de Contabilidade e Administração do Porto para a obtenção do grau de Mestre em Estudos Interculturais para o Negócio, sob a orientação do Doutor Marco António Cerqueira Mendes Furtado.

Versão final que contempla as sugestões e comentários do júri.



Abstract:

The present report is part of the curricular internship of the Master's degree in Intercultural Studies for Business, from the Porto Accounting and Business School (*Instituto Superior de Contabilidade e Administração do Porto*). This internship took place at the tourism field related company, Dixo's Oporto Apartments.

Globalization has been increasing at unprecedented rates and with that, the limits and the borders between countries and nations have been reducing. As a result, there has been a marked increase in the need for intercultural communication as it becomes reality and people depend more on this type of communication.

The tourism sector is no exception from the inevitable changes imposed by globalization, and it too depends on intercultural communication. Cities such as Porto with a great flux of tourism rely on the finest quality services delivered by leading professionals. High standards can only be achieved by those who are used to intercultural communication and are familiarized with concepts such as globalization and interculturality.

The purpose of this report is to describe and understand, at the most precise level the activities carried out during the internship based on the concepts and knowledge learnt during the master's degree.

Keywords: Globalization, Culture, Intercultural Communication, Tourism

Resumo

O presente relatório insere-se no âmbito do estágio curricular do Mestrado em Estudos Interculturais para Negócio, no Instituto Superior de Contabilidade e Administração do Porto (ISCAP). O estágio decorreu na empresa Dixo's Oporto Apartments que se insere na área do Turismo.

A globalização tem vindo a crescer a níveis nunca previstos e, com isso, os limites e as fronteiras entre países e nações vêm diminuindo. Com isso, a comunicação intercultural tem crescido assim como o crescimento da comunicação entre diferentes culturas, uma constante e as pessoas dependem cada vez mais desse tipo de comunicação sendo uma realidade óbvia atualmente.

O turismo vive desse tipo de comunicação e da globalização. Cidades como o Porto, com grande fluxo turístico, contam com serviços de qualidade prestados por profissionais formados por excelência. Padrões elevados só podem ser alcançados por aqueles que estão acostumados a comunicação intercultural e familiarizados com conceitos como globalização e interculturalidade.

O objetivo deste relatório é descrever e compreender da forma mais precisa as atividades desenvolvidas durante o estágio com base nos conceitos e conhecimentos aprendidos durante o mestrado.

Palavras chave: Globalização, Cultura, Comunicação Intercultural, Turismo

List of Abbreviations

ACI - Animal Computer Intelligence

AL – Alojamento Local

ATPN - Associação Turismo do Porto e Norte

CEMI - Conventions, Exhibitions, Meetings, Incentives

CMP – Câmara Municipal do Porto

DGS – Direção Geral de Saúde

etc. - et cetera

GATT - General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade

GDP - Gross Domestic Product

IATA - International Air Transport Association

ICCA - International Congress and Convention Association

MECE - Meetings, Events, Conventions, Exhibitions

MCE - Meetings, Conventions, Exhibitions

MC&IT - Meetings, Conventions & Incentive Travel

MICE - Meetings, Incentives, Conventions, Exhibitions

MI - Meetings Industry

N.D. - Not Defined

NGO - Non-Governmental Organisation

OECD - Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development

PCVB - Porto Convention & Visitors Bureau

RPK - Revenue Passenger Kilometre

SEF - Serviço de Estrangeiros e Fronteiras

OECD - Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development

UNWTO - United Nations World Trade Organization

UNESCO - United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

UEFA - Union of European Football Associations

WTO - World Trade Organization

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Chapter I – Introduction

The present written paper combines the report on the curricular internship for the conclusion of the master's degree in Intercultural Studies for Business. The following paper embraces the experience of practical work carried out during five months at the tourism company Dixo's Oporto Apartments.

The idea to perform the internship, over the practical internship over the thesis or dissertation, was to be able to put into practice all the knowledge learned throughout the master's program. The master's program relies a lot on communication and intercultural competence, hence why the internship felt like the perfect opportunity to put into practice all these skills for the last semester of the degree. Another great advantage seen from the perspective of the internship was the opportunity to develop needful competencies and expertise to enter the labour market and thus starting to create a professional network base.

The areas of work established at the beginning of the internship were intercultural communication, business, and management. Of course, these predefined areas of work were all focused on the context of tourism, as it too was of large interest. For the internship, the following aims were set:

- Improve language skills (English, Spanish and French);
- Improve communication skills, both written and spoken;
- Improve business communication, written and spoken;
- Understand the operations of a small company;
- Learn and improve management skills.

This report is organized into four chapters. The first chapter approaches a thoroughly theoretical framework regarding culture, interculturality, globalization, multiculturalism, globalization, the tourism sector as well as business tourism. This chapter also approaches some theoretical analysis on tourism; how it positively affects the economy and how it can be an engine for culture, as well as some less-positive effects of the industry. The first chapter also explores the platform used by Dixo's for performing most of its business such that an appreciation can be made towards the way the company operates.

The second chapter focuses on the host company for the internship, Dixo's. It details the process by which the company came to be what it is today, its roots, how it started, how it works nowadays, its composition, and its expansion in the tourism market. This chapter also studies the accommodation services provided by the host company, known as Local Accommodation or "Alojamento Local" in Portuguese. The study explores how this type of accommodation service has changed tourism in Portugal, its rules, and its benefits to business owners involved in this realm.

The last chapter is a detailed summary of the five months of the internship. It provides an overview of the internship itself, activities carried out during the internship, a detailed description of the difficulties endured during the process, and analyses whether the tasks were performed successfully or not. Even though the internship had to be suspended for a few weeks due to the pandemic.

The fourth chapter, although not as extensive as the previous ones, provides a critical analysis of the internship and the master's degree that is completed by it. The chapter begins by providing an overall look of both, and then specifies all positive and negative aspects of both as per the intern's perspective.

Chapter II – Theoretical Framework

This chapter approaches the theoretical background of some concepts and notions that are crucial for a complete understanding of the report. The chapter addresses culture, interculturality, multiculturalism, and globalization. Moreover, the chapter addresses the previously mentioned concepts in the context of tourism and provides some insight into the importance of tourism for the economy, its impact on culture, and moreover the relationship between the city of Porto and the tourism industry. Finally, the chapter delves into Airbnb, a platform for private accommodation, for which Dixo's relies heavily on for proliferating their business.

2.1 Culture

2.1.1 Definition

The concept of culture varies a lot from author to author. Between the years of 1920 and 1950, one hundred and fifty definitions were introduced (Kroeber & Kluckhohn 1952). With the concept being in constant change and transformation for over two centuries, the notion of culture has been everywhere and so often represented and discussed in the political debate, and yet it is still hard to find one single accurate definition. In the year of 1952, two American anthropologists, Kroeber and Kluckhohn (1952) reviewed concepts and definitions of culture and concluded that: "Despite a century of efforts to define culture adequately, there was in the early 1990s no agreement among anthropologists regarding its nature." (Apte p.23, 1994).

However, within this uncertainty of what is the most accurate definition of the word culture, there is some content that is accepted by most authors such as the relationship within societies and civilizations as well as each individual human role in it. Culture consists of the specific ways of reflecting, feeling, and behaving, and it is obtained and passed on primarily by symbols within a community (Kluckhohn, 1951). These notions of culture refer to communities that usually share a specific set of ideas, beliefs, and values as well as their way of living and behaviours. These factors, when combined, give the participants a sense of belonging and a specific cultural identity (Kluckhohn, 1951).

With this, cultural understanding is becoming progressively relevant because of the increased interactions between individuals from different nations and cultures, otherwise known as intercultural communication (Lee, 2006).

All types of cultures transmit unique ways and values that help shape individuals decision-making skills such that they may respond to different day to day situations accordingly. Culture, at its most straightforward definition, means sharing symbols, norms, and values in a specific social organization (Walsham, 2002). Moreover Hall (1990), states culture to be a system for the creation, storing, and processing of information. Likewise, by association, national culture applies to a set of values that are shared by the participants of a nation (Gurung & Prater, 2006).

There are multiple other cited definitions for the word *culture*. A few anthropologists such as Hofstede (1991), Czinkota and Trompenaars (1993) have agreed that culture is founded on “language, economy, religion, policies, values, status, attitudes, manners, customs, material items, and education which subsequently influences values” (Kanungo, 2006). Culture is crucial for the comprehension of social systems evolution because it dominates the norms and ethics of those same systems and the role of communities and their cooperation inside and beyond systems (Kanungo, 2006).

Culture is an exclusive quality of a specific social group; the values and norms that are mutual to its members set them apart from any new and different social group and are shaped by their individual beliefs (Kanungo, 2006). One culture is not considered any more correct than another; they are just distinctive. Those differences are deeply rooted and direct how individuals act and relate with each other, whether they share the same culture or not (Kanungo, 2006).

2.1.2 Interculturality and Multiculturality

The contemporary world lives in constant intercultural exchanges, at the pace of the new technologies, and the fast transmission and reception of new information that is constantly evolving (Sarmiento, 2010). The idea of interculturalism suggested here analyses and relates both intercultural and experience. This approach of interculturalism

can be linked to the view of multiculturalism, meaning a demarked, stagnant space, with each different culture correlating in a closed space. In fact, multicultural freedom results as a combination of intercultural, multidirectional, and mutual actions and flows (Sarmiento, 2010).

Both terms, interculturality and multiculturalism, are often wrongly used as interchangeable terms (Sarmiento, 2010) and both have a geographic motive behind their usage. Multiculturalism is more generally used in Great-British literature while interculturality is more common in continental Europe and Latin America. Essentially, multiculturalism has been analysed under an existential approach, as an existing or desired social reality where various groups of different cultures coexist and come together by a representation of each other's customs (Abdallah-Preteille, 2006, p. 480). Multiculturalism targets the main and/or host society and the migrant or minorities.

Instead, interculturalism utilizes more conscious, communicative, and interpretive tools to reach its *audience*. As Martine Abdallah-Preteille (2006, p.480) affirms, "because no person is intercultural, per se, nor is interculturalism an attribute. Only intercultural analysis can give it this character, through a paradigm of hybrid, segmentary, and heterogeneous thinking". Additionally, both terms have a prefix, -inter and -multi, that accentuate exchange, democracy, and equality just like the prefix suggests, there is a sense of mutuality and reciprocity (Brito, 2008). When comparing the state of the world at the present, where globalization is constant as well as exchange, both terms perfectly fit the continuous interaction between people and between different cultures .

To embrace interculturality and be able to perform it, one should be interculturally competent, which means owning a set of personal skills, knowledge, behaviour, and beliefs needed for fruitful intercultural exchanges. The focus is on the individual, and which skills and abilities can be acquired through practicing and implementing that same knowledge. The term interculturality, "the radical restructuring of the historically pronounced uneven relations of wealth and power that have existed between Europeans and their descendants and indigenous and other subordinated groups during the last half-millennium." (Medina-López-Portillo & Sinnigen 2009 p.250).

Intercultural competence is mostly reached and approached by an academic cluster (Medina-López-Portillo & Sinnigen, 2000). Although most contemporary nations are diverse in the cultural aspects, the real diversification occurs depending on and bearing

in mind the context and background of each individual. The principal historical reasons that contributed to ethnic and cultural differences are slavery, immigration, and colonization (Cushner, 1998). Moreover, interculturalism focuses more on adapting towards interaction and dialogue. Interculturalism is accepted as something not so communal than multiculturalism and is something more devoted to a stronger sense of community and the idea of sharing.

2.2 Globalization challenges and opportunities

2.2.1 Definition

Globalization (Griffin & Khan, 1992) is a natural process of evolution and adaptation, globalization goes further in the domain of politics and economics to grasp science, culture, and lifestyles. So, globalization is a "multi-dimensional phenomenon applicable to a variety of forms of social action--economic, political, legal, cultural, military and technological--and sites of social action, such as the environment" (Malcolm, 2013).

There is some lack of agreement between scholars regarding the correct and unique definition of globalization, or how this affects individuals' behaviours. Some academics claim that globalization has political influences over anything else (Gills, 1997). It is known to negatively affect income and social inequality, women, and the poor (Sen, 1997; Gills, 1997). Others believe that "nation-states have already lost their role as meaningful units of participation in the global economy of today's borderless world" (Ohmae, 1996, p.11). The bottom line is that globalization plays an important role in the world economy and consequently has constant and noticeable repercussions on the socio-economic environment and lifestyles of individuals and communities across the globe. According to McGrew (1992, p.262), globalization is "the forging of a multiplicity of linkages and interconnections between the states and societies which make up the modern world and has significant consequences for individuals and communities in quite distant parts of the globe" world system, as well as the process by which events, decisions, and activities in one part of the world can come to.

Regarding trades and tariffs, as globalization eliminates borders, it also reduces tariffs due to the constant increase in trade between countries (Yi, 2003). The past-half century has experienced great growth in world trade (Figure 1). This increase can be explained by the worldwide import tax reductions that have occurred due to the implementation of GATT-General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade, regulations, and agreements times (WTO, 2003;2006;2013). This increases imports and exports because lower tariffs reduce the cost of foreign goods relative to domestic goods in a specific country. As seen in Figure 1, the trade growth averaged 2-3 percent per year between the years of 1962 and 1999. This means that the export share of merchandise went up 3 times (WTO, 2003;2006;2013). During this period, tariffs fell by 11 percent which is rather small for the surprising relative increase in trade. Also, to note, is the nonlinear growth in trade with respect to tariff reductions; for instance, tariff reductions were stronger between the mid-1980s to the 1990s than in earlier reductions. Consequently, tariffs kept reducing in the 2000s.

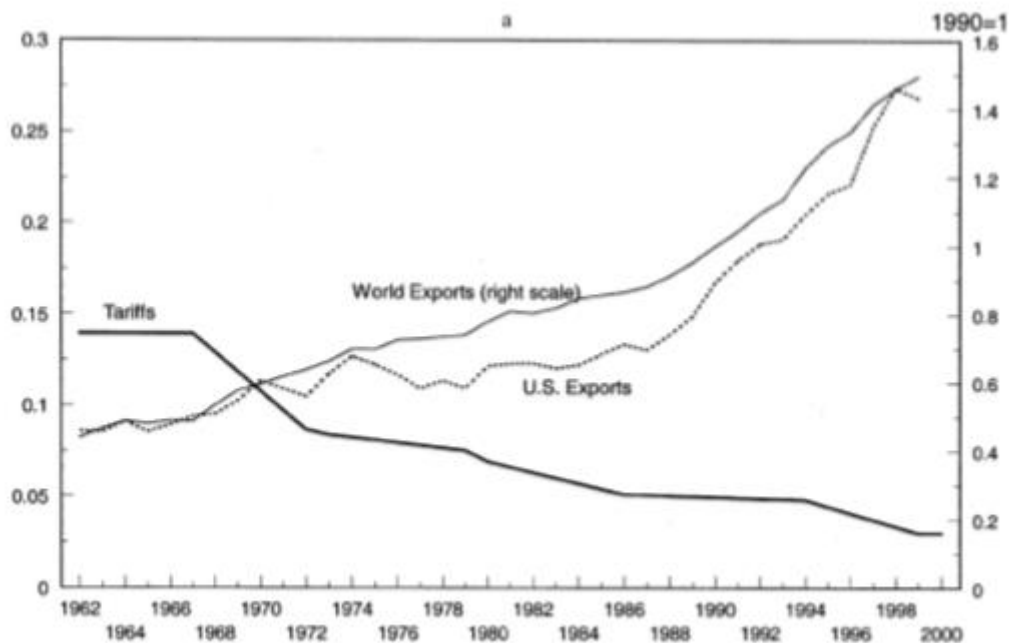


Figure 1 - Manufacturing Export Shares of GDP and Tariff Rates. World exports as well as USA exports have increased as tariff rates have been decreasing the past century.

Source: World Trade Organization, 2003

2.2.2 Globalization challenges – the increase of difference

The disparity created by globalization nowadays is often seen at two different levels, one “*bad*” and the other “*not so bad*”. In the “*not so bad*” version, the difference is accepted as a crucial side-effect of economic growth within a nation (Berger, 2014). With globalization, the argument that some workforce wage increases, but the same do not happen in other fields of work, the increase of difference will be greater. In the ‘*bad*’ version, globalization is interpreted as making the rich richer and the poor poorer. That is to say, the salary of low skilled workers decreases because of a lesser need for their type skills, while the salary of more qualified workers increases, creating a gap between the two groups (Berger, 2014) .

Globalization today is a reality, and the manufacturing of products and goods is becoming universal. For example, one piece of Supreme clothing, which is designed in New York may actually be manufactured in Portugal, Canada, or China.

Matching workers with similar or non-similar skills help understanding why the production in the globalized world undergoes an increase in inequality. The better the match between workers is done, the less the inequality will be noticeable (Berger, 2014). If a worker with a good education and some good skill levels pairs someone with fewer skills, the less skilled one will benefit from the more skilled worker by working with him/her. But, if the more skilled worker is a better match to work with someone even more advanced, located in a developed economy, most likely that person will be incentivized to leave his country and go abroad (Berger, 2014).

Subsequently, less-skilled workers have no chances to enter the globalization process due to the demand for skilled workers, where this last one will experience a rise in its wages. This creates a drawback, how would it be possible for less-skilled workers, with fewer opportunities, to enter and profit from the globalized world? As Maskin (Berger, 2014) states: “The right thing to do is not to try to stop globalization - that would be foolish -because globalization certainly does increase average income in all countries, instead what we can do is allow the low skilled workers of the world to share in the fruits of globalization.”

Another great predicament is, how can the change previously mentioned happen in a sustainable and fair way? Because those less-skilled workers do not have the funds

to support the cost of courses or classes. Companies are also hesitant to endure the costs of training and courses as that would itself be a big cost to themselves, nor do they prefer to hire specially trained individuals as that would incur a demand for higher wages. The only viable and sustainable option to do so is to involve third parties such as the government, public institutions, foundations, and NGOs (Berger, 2014).

2.3 Tourism, Culture and Business

2.3.1 The Tourism Sector

Tourism is a crucial sector and is considered “the motor” for improvement in many worldwide economies, especially those considered developing nations. Compared with several other economic sectors, the percentage of growth in the tourism field is usually higher (WTO, 2003). The number of visitors worldwide has been constantly rising from 25 million in 1950 to 165 million in 1970 to over 693 million in 2001. The number in 2020 reached the number 1 billion, much so due to the pandemic (Cabrini, 2002).

According to Cunha (n.d.), it was around the 18th century that some writers such as Stendhal, a French novelist, and the Portuguese Alexandre Herculano noticed the positive impact made on countries and regions by visitors of landscapes and monuments (Cunha, n.d.). The purpose and reasons for traveling have been changing and increasing over time, resulting in more and more people travelling abroad for the purposes of visiting, health or work. Because of this, there has been increasing demand for spaces for tourists to stay overnight and to spend time; places such as hotels and resorts started to be created. With this, an economic activity arises due to its immense potential.

Similarly, to the term *culture*, the term *tourism* is difficult to explain in one given definition. Most academics cannot agree on one particular definition; thus, it becomes difficult to delineate the limits of the term. Mostly because tourism is linked to almost all human-social sectors (Beni, 2005). Some definitions prevail over the economic aspects, others the social and cultural side of it, others the anthropological

effects, and even the geographic aspects. Fundamentally, tourism is a large combination of very different phenomena (Tribe, 1977).

Tourism's highly evolving nature is subject to the influence of factors that cannot be controlled or changed by those that work directly or indirectly in the sector. These factors could be anything related to the economic environment, natural disasters, political issues, or terrorist outbreaks (WTO, 2013). The events previously mentioned are very sensitive to the tourism sector due to the rapid changes that can cause.

The many benefits of tourism are often overlooked for the sake of focusing on an economic outlook. One of its overlooked benefits is its cultural importance; tourism is needed to foster awareness amongst different cultures (Canan, 1989). The tourism sector contribution to its country's GDP, but sometimes tend to ignore the other many contributions that come with it such as the social and cultural interchange that aids in improving interculturally competent individuals (WTO, 2003;2006;2013).

Moreover, the growth of globalization, and tourism as a result, has stimulated a perceived notion of social status. That is to say, the more or the better opportunities a person has to travel and explore, the more educated they become about cultures, thus the higher their social status. Meaning that the more people are educated and the more interest they have in culture, the more they travel (Brito, 2008). Subsequently, the more opportunities a person has to travel, the richer they are.

2.3.2 Tourism as driver to culture and heritage

Cultural and creative industries represent one of the most rapidly expanding sectors in the global economy with a growth rate of 17.6 % in the Middle East, 13.9 % in Africa, 11.9 % in South America, 9.7 % in Asia, 6.9 % in Oceania, and 4.3 % in North and Central America (UNESCO, 2017). Investment in culture and creativity has proved to be an important source for socio- and economic growth. Today, many cities use cultural heritage and cultural events to promote their image and their communities. This improves greater social inclusiveness, and resilience, innovation, creativity and entrepreneurship for individuals and communities, and the use of local resources, skills, and knowledge promoting corporate innovation (UNESCO, 2017).

Respecting and supporting cultural expressions contribute to reinforce the social capital of a community and deposit trust in institutions that work towards this goal. Cultural factors also influence people's lives, individual behaviour, and consumption habits, and interaction with the natural environment. (Magni, 2016) Local and indigenous knowledge systems and patterns supporting environmental management practices provide a valuable and personal view and tools for fighting ecological challenges, preventing the loss of biodiversity, reducing land degradation, and reducing the climate impact of these changes (Magni, 2016). Heritage is both tangible and intangible and includes everything from traditions, monuments, objects, and culture (Magni, 2016).

We can separate heritage into three main categories:

- Natural Heritage: Everything that is the natural landscape like mountains, lakes, rivers, coastline, and countryside. The combination of all biodiversity, flora and fauna, and ecosystems (UNESCO, 2017).
- Built Heritage: One of the most important cultural aspects. Everything from the Rome Colosseum to the Eiffel Tower, to the Statue of Liberty. Cathedrals, houses, museums, and markets, all belong to this section. Everything that appears to have had physical evidence and cultural development (UNESCO, 2017).

- Cultural Heritage: Music, literature, language, theatre. Represents the ways of living by certain communities or nations like customs, practices, and objects that have been passing through generations and prevailed as a characteristic of that specific group or community (UNESCO, 2017).

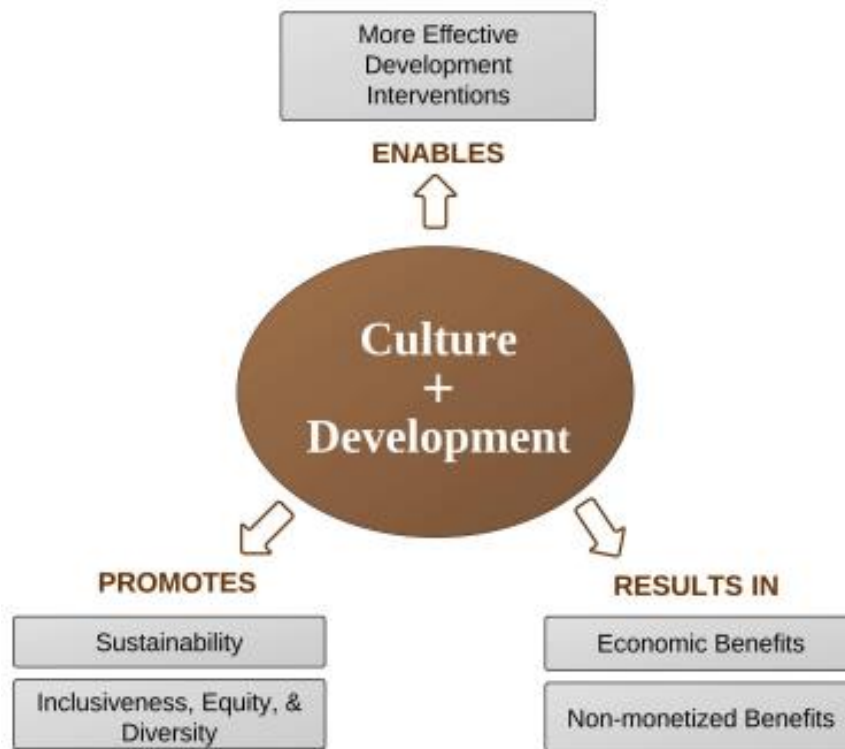


Figure 2-Culture as a development driver

Source: UNESCO, 2018

The contribution and impact of the tourism industry on the relationship between different communities are great and very significant especially when it increases peace and problem solving as well as conflicts. Not long ago, international institutions for tourism, as well as academics and other professionals involved in the tourism industry, became keen on examining tourism's potential for peace making (D' Amore, 1988). The crucial supposition behind the notion of peace tourism is that when people travel frequently all over the world, it helps them get to know new people, cultures, values etc. That experience can increase mutual understanding among people who have been living

in diverse cultural backgrounds. Moreover, such travel also eases the host countries economically and politically (D' Amore, 1988). Tourism, as seen in figure 2, is without a doubt a mixture of both an economic industry and cultural representation and movement (Lee, 1996).

Tourists when travelling from one place to the other, they get the opportunity to experience other cultures and understand their behaviour as a community and as an individual as well as their values and traditions. This industry is like an engine of promotion for the cultural aspects of communities and sites, calling up to all those involved in the promotion of that same place or ritual. Not only that, but tourism can also create space for nations to come together and communicate to reduce conflicts and support harmony amongst communities. Also, it helps people to put themselves in others' perspectives to see how they think, act, and relate with others and understand their behaviours, traditions, and values to understand the difference. The previously mentioned differences are associated with culture, religion, language, social and historical, geographical, and economic (Lee, 1996).

Cultural ethics change a lot from one culture to the other but that does not stop one person to acquire new values or ethics from a totally different culture. That is exactly what Reisinger and Turner (1998) study, the relationship and interaction between those who visit a place and the ones that live in it. Different lifestyles and social behaviours as well as very distinct in terms of religion and ethics. Here, tourism plays a big role in approaching communities and allowing interaction.

Consequently, advancements in transportation services have increased the ease of travelling abroad, and technological improvement is also a factor for faster and improved travelling. This facilitates the exchange of values amongst nations creating new opportunities for communication and interaction. Interactions amongst, both tourists and locals, may lead to accommodating the values of the hosts by accepting the beliefs of those who host. Interactions can also lead to cultivating the original values of both parties involved, while respecting individuals hosts values and beliefs, this means bringing everyone's beliefs to other places but always respecting the local cultures.

These values and cultural components are a very important piece of the puzzle for cultural reconstruction for hosts and local identity. This increases the chances for

new ideologies, new values, and even possible changes in language and lifestyle (Macleod, 1999).

2.3.3 Economic impact of Tourism

There is no doubt that tourism has a great impact on the economy of most every single country or nation where tourism is operating. Tourism creates a great impact in several sectors from hotels and local accommodations and not only that but other services apart from tourism benefit from it as well, such as:

- Development of tourism goods and services.
- Contribution to the balance of payments.
- The flow of foreign Exchange.
- Contacts between the tourism sector and other sectors.
- Stimulation of investments.
- Volume and intensity of tourist expenses at the destination.
- Development of an economic base at destinations.
- Greater distribution of gains within a specific area.
- Greater adjustment on the seasonality of the areas (Santana, 1997, p.71).

The money spent by tourists is very important for the welcoming areas because it positively affects a great number of secondary services such as bars, supermarkets, small businesses, restaurants, and others that help to generate money flow and create people's movement (Pérez et al., 2009). Tourism generates many jobs, directly, indirectly, and by opportunity. As the writer Santana (1997) describes, these jobs can be considered as direct employment like hotels and apartments, being the ones that generate the most jobs. The employment can also be indirect, for example, transportations, agencies, and banks. And lastly, employment can be by opportunity, which means all services that benefit from the presence of tourism. The greatness of tourism is measured at several levels, no doubt that it influences several businesses in a very positive way and creates loads of new opportunities and money flow (Pérez et al., 2009).

Alongside tourism comes creativity to be able to push boundaries and create new ways and platform to facilitate tourist's experience. Creativity as an engine of innovation can contribute to diversification and achieving a globally competitive economy. The orange economy fundamentals are based on pillars of creativity and talent that will lead to the creation of valuable goods and services. Such as jobs with social impact, the case of Airbnb. Orange Economy main sectors is entrepreneurship. There has been a great improvement and continuous strengthening of young and new generations that are given creativity as core value on their activities (Buitrago Restrepo & Márquez, 2013). Back at the peak of the Fourth Industrial Revolution, creativity was playing a leading role in confronting changes in the methods of production at factories and how clerks work. The future of businesses, no matter their size and scale will rely a lot on the ability to keep pushing limits and boundaries into developing and innovating their services and products (Buitrago Restrepo & Márquez, 2013).

2.3.4 Business Tourism

According to Marques & Ribeiro (2017), business tourism is an umbrella term, not only does it include the obvious tourism activities and services, but also specific affairs and events related to the business world, such as:

- MECE (Meetings, Events, Conventions, Exhibitions);
- MCE (Meetings, Conventions, Exhibitions);
- CEMI (Conventions, Exhibitions, Meetings, Incentives);
- MC&IT (Meetings, Conventions & Incentive Travel);
- MICE (Meetings, Incentives, Conventions, Exhibitions);
- Meetings Industry (MI) (Marques & Ribeiro, 2017, p.157).

All meetings and events mentioned before including activities like promotion, sales, hospitality, meetings, seminars, congresses, displays, fairs, etc. The goal is to share ideas, make business, learn, meet new people, and have debates and discussion between participants (UNWTO, 2006). Swarbrooke and Horner (2001) mention the

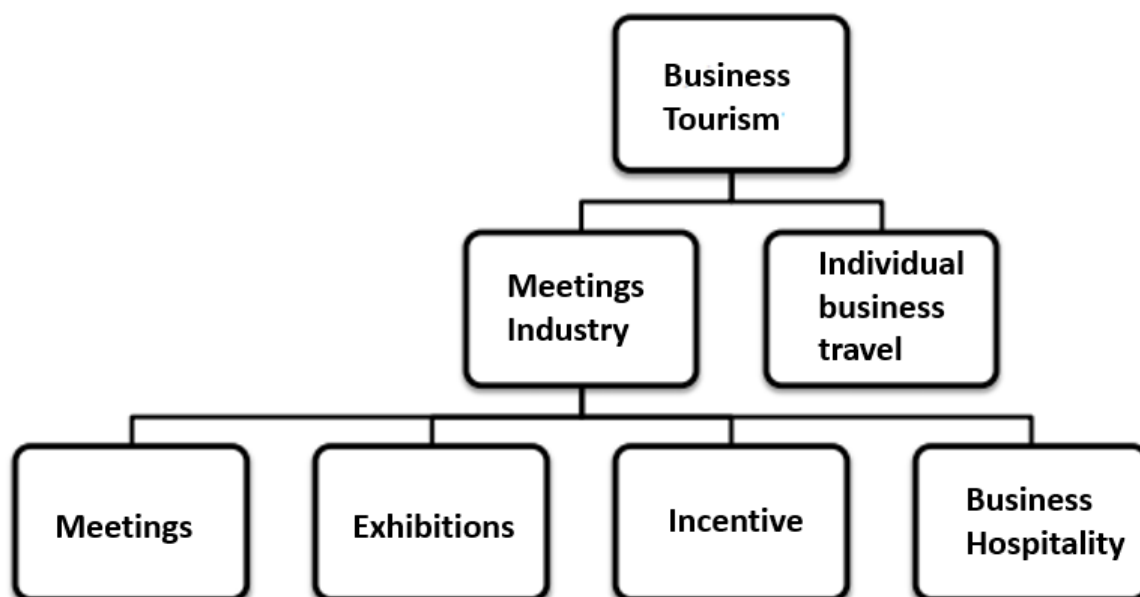


Figure 3-Structure of Tourism Business

Source: Marques & Ribeiro (2017, p. 154)

most common reasons for business to happen are meetings, conferences, conventions, exhibitions, training courses, product launches and incentive travel.

Davidson & Cope (2003) have separated the business travels into two distinct groups: Individual business trips and business tourism where individual business trips are regular, meaning that the person is often required to travel to do his or her job and needs to be outside of his or her hometown (Figure 3). In contrast, business tourism is when a person travels for meetings, conferences, exhibitions, and others (Figure 3).

Although individual business trips are important for business tourism, they do not generate as much of an impact as the Meetings Industry. Business Tourism when done in groups for the purposes of exhibitions, meetings, and incentive tourism or business hospitality do generate more income to destination countries. This is the part of business tourism that is considered the bulk, and with this said it is clear why business tourism destinations try to reach for big groups to generate more income.

Business tourism in Portugal propelled in 2007 with the creation of a program called “Eventos para projeção de Portugal” (Marques & Ribeiro, 2017). The program’s goal was the promotion of events and conventions for the purposes of business tourism. However, the program was abolished in 2012. A new program was created by “Turismo de Portugal” in 2016 to promote this same sector, this time the program

included fairs and corporate meetings in several regions of the country (Marques & Ribeiro, 2017). Lisbon, the capital, is by far the most popular city in the country for the congregation of business-related activities to happen. It is followed by Porto, the second largest economic hub and city in the country. Compared with other major European cities, Lisbon ranks in 9th place for being the city to hold business meetings, and Porto 42nd (Figure 3).

by Porto. Comparing with European cities, Lisbon ranks in 9th place and Porto in 42nd, as seen in figure 3.

Posição	Cidade	Número de reuniões
1	Berlim	195
2	Paris	186
3	Barcelona	180
4	Viena	178
5	Londres	171
...		
9	Lisboa	145
...		
42	Porto	60
...		
301	Aveiro	7
...		
373	Coimbra	5

Fonte: ICCA (2016).

Figure 4-European Ranking of cities with the most meetings in 2015

Source: ICCA (2016)

Most meetings organized in Portugal were in hotel spaces (43.1%), followed by congress centres (26.3%) and universities (21.1%) (ICCA, 2011). These numbers indicate that there is a clear preference for the organization of business events in hotels, rather than congress centres and universities. Many hotels in major cities are dedicated to business meetings and events, making them the perfect place for this occasion. Also, the fact they are designed to host big events makes it easier to organize and plan for such events. Not to mention the convenience factor of not having to relocate from place to place, as guests will be staying the night in the same place in which the event is to be held. This saves time and transportation costs.

In the north region of Portugal, we can find the Association for Tourism of Porto and The North Region¹. It was founded in 1995 (ATPN, n.d.) by the city halls of the cities of Porto, Vila Nova de Gaia, Gondomar, and Espinho with the support of the Porto Industrial Association² and the University of Porto (ATPN, n.d.). The association's main goal is to potentiate and motivate event promoters and organizers to organize their congresses and fairs in the region of Porto and the north of Portugal. To accomplish this, it is required that the regions offer a very competent and educated work of force in all areas of business tourism.

Besides a very attractive business tourism destination, the city of Porto has much more to offer, from museums and monuments, to beaches, cultural events, typical foods, and wine. Additionally, the city's surroundings and adjacent neighbouring cities offer unique experiences that are very attractive for foreigners and locals. The city has been crowned three times as the Best European Destination in 2012, 2014 and 2017 (Nogueira, 2018). The city of Porto is recognized as a World Heritage Site under the UNESCO protection act of (No. 107/2001 of September 8) since 1996 (UNESCO, n.d.).

2.3.5 Airbnb platform

Airbnb evolution is one of the most rapid and significant developments in the tourism industry and the way people book their accommodation and experiences. It was founded and launched on August 11th of 2008 by a group of three friends, Brian Chesky, Joe Gebbia, and Nathan Blecharczyk who were living in a very expensive San Francisco apartment and decided to announce on the internet an air mattress in a room with breakfast included (McCann, 2015). The page's original name was *Airbedandbreakfast.com* and it successfully gained popularity becoming one of the world's best known accommodation services.

Airbnb's influence is so big that the platform can create new entrepreneurs on a small or large scale. Individuals have the option of renting part of their household as

¹ In Portuguese: Associação de Turismo do Porto e Norte

² In Portuguese: Associação Industrial do Porto

accommodation or choose to rent the whole property. However, there are also established companies that own or manage a significant number of properties. This is to say that there is a wide range of opportunities for people to make money by listing their properties for temporary rent.

Airbnb has also the option to rent some exotic and sometimes extravagant places such as castles, boats, igloos, and even treehouses. When it comes down to the booking process the website is quite simple and intuitive. A great feature of the platform is that you can contact the host directly and start a conversation. This is great because the person making the booking can expose its doubts and questions about the place or city and even ask for recommendations.

On the other side, hosts have a proper and user-friendly platform where they can post and edit the listings and talk directly through a chat with the guests. In terms of economic management, the platform also has a section dedicated to controlling, sending money, receiving money, seeing transactions, and updating prices and fees (Airbnb, 2020). Another great feature and one that both, guests, and hosts, pay very much attention is the ratings. Both properties/hosts and guests have ratings from one star (bad) to five stars (amazing) that encourage both parties to do their best to provide a good experience. The host thrives for a perfect stay with a clean and fresh apartment as well as enough amenities and style, and the guest thrives for leaving the apartment in good condition when he or she leaves.

Hosts can also strive to achieve the status of “Super host”. The super hosts status is a badge that is awarded to experienced hosts, with very good ratings and reviews, and who are keen on providing great stays by going above and beyond their guests’ needs. The status is displayed on the website and is visible to guests upon searching for an accommodation. Achieving this status is desirable because it is something that guests look for when deciding and choosing properties, thus making these super hosts and their properties more attractive.

Over time Airbnb has been innovating its offer and trying to create new ways to encourage people to travel and others to share something they know or their spaces. One of those innovations was the Airbnb Experiences, where an individual or a group can, for example, share a skill, teach a class, host a local tour of the city, among others. Essentially, an individual can exchange an experience for payment. This Airbnb section

has opened even more doors for those who want to share a little bit of their city and its traditions.

Another feature that Airbnb has released, one that is very important for this report, is the Airbnb for Business. Here, the Airbnb platform, has created a filter in its search engine, to filter properties appropriate for business trips. Furthermore, “Airbnb Plus” was introduced in 2019, which works similarly to the Super Host status. If your property is part of the “Airbnb Plus”, it means it is considered to be of top quality, amenities, and facilities and has been personally inspected and photographed by an Airbnb representative (Airbnb, 2020).

The growth of the company has been nothing but spectacular, in 2010 Airbnb had 140,000 guest arrivals (Molla, 2017 & Team, 2018). In 2011 that number more than doubled to 800,000. It reached three million in 2012, six million in 2013, 16 million in 2014, and so on until reaching an estimated 164 million users in 2018 (Molla, 2017 & Team, 2018).

Despite all of this success, Airbnb and its users are not always well seen by others, especially the hotels sector. Airbnb has been accused of intimidating the hotel sector and even being the root cause of the destruction of the hotel sector (Griswold, 2016). Airbnb was also accused of not having specific rules and not being regulated by some countries where the platform operates. Another accusation made against Airbnb is the disruption of communities across the globe, where locals residences are transformed into places to rent to tourists (Airbnb, 2020). There have been countless protests and rallies to protest Airbnb and its position and effect in the tourism market. Protesters go after tax obligations to expose Airbnb hosts and to add more regulation and control to new spaces built with the sole purpose of short-term rentals (Guttentag, 2017).

With all this said, one cannot ignore the impact that Airbnb has had in the tourism field and how much it has been influencing the way guests plan and book their trips and how they experience their leisure time.

2.3.6 COVID-19 a world pandemic

2.3.6.1. A new reality

Over the past decades, several types of coronavirus (CoVs), have had several outbreaks in some areas in East Asia and the Middle East. It was at the beginning of the century that the first acute respiratory syndrome was diagnosed, in 2002 SARS³ in East Asia (Duarte *et al.*, 2020). By 2012 in the Middle East another respiratory syndrome was diagnosed, MERS⁴. In 2019, the world is presented with a new infectious disease. Severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2 (SARS-COV-2), otherwise known as Covid-19 (Duarte *et al.*, 2020).

The Covid-19 symptoms and diseases go from a regular cold to a serious and fateful illness. Due to the harshness of the virus and its outbreak and how easy it can spread on an international scale, the WHO (World Health Organization) announced a “global health emergency” on January 31st, 2020 (Badcock, 2020). Later, on March 11th, a situation of a pandemic was declared. Now, health workers around the world are not to effectively treat Covid-19 since there is not enough available information yet on how to successfully treat the virus and how to stop its propagation (Badcock, 2020). No approved vaccines nor specific antiviral drugs are available yet for people to use for treatment. Most nations are currently making great efforts to prevent the spreading of the virus by implementing contingency measures like reducing and discouraging making crowds. As has been proved, the virus spreads extremely easily especially in closed spaces with large numbers of people.

As previously discussed, the globalization phenomenon has facilitated the ease with which people move from one place to another. The fast-moving world of today allows for the fast and easy interchange of people across the globe. This easiness has raised a big concern when it comes to public health and sanitary hygiene. This means that diseases and viruses that, in the past, were only affecting a specific region or town, nowadays can affect an entire country or continent (Rocha, 2020). Covid-19 is one of the most recent and greatest representations of the effects of globalization, as we can see that the virus spread to almost every corner of the world in a matter of days. As a result,

³ Severe acute respiratory syndrome

⁴ Middle East respiratory syndrome

public health and safety is at the top of the agenda in most countries to try and prevent the fast spread of this disease. The toughest aspect in mind is the traceability of the virus, as one person that is infected may not be aware of this, and thus may end up transmitting the virus to those around creating an active and constant line of transmission.

2.3.6.2. How the virus is affecting mobility

Mobility has always been a common practice of billions of people every day. The free movement of tourists, businesspeople, students, and even refugees is our constant reality. In the year 2018, the number of tourists travelling outside of their country reached a record number of 1.4 billion trips (Yulianto, 2020). The number of people living outside their birth country is 272 million and this is estimated to increase to 405 million by 2050. These numbers indicate the great number of mobility people are used to and how easy it is to go from one place to another, no matter the distance (Yulianto, 2020).

The pandemic has clearly affected the freeness and the easiness of movement of people. With constant growing numbers of infections and deaths, local governments and ministers were obligated to close borders and impose a mandatory quarantine to everyone. Businesses were forced to close/reduce their activity, which makes the economy slow down. Some specialists see the pandemic recession, the worst since the Great Depression (Gopinath, 2020). This invisible enemy requires local authorities and governments to evaluate and rearrange how international trading and mobility continues to function. As Ulrich Beck states, international ecological disasters, terrorism, and pandemics are vulnerabilities that our current world is used to (Yulianto, 2020).

If the mobility of people and goods continue at the same rate and under the same conditions that we now have, the chances of repeating the spread of a disease are quite high. We are seeing these repercussions now with the continuous recurrent cases of Covid-19 cases. It is aggravating to see that current measures in place are not enough to contain the spread of contagions. Governments and international health organizations

will have to set more rigorous procedures to regulate the health of individuals such that the free movement of people and goods can continue.

2.3.6.3. Tourism sector in state of pandemic

The tourism industry was one of the first ones to be negatively affected by the coronavirus (Covid-19) pandemic. The strict measures taken by governments closed down borders and set a halt on tourism. Some specialists think that the crisis created by the virus can translate to a decline of around 60% to 80% in the international tourism sector in 2020 (Gopinath, 2020). One of the Airbnb owners, Brian Chesky, has said that the pandemic has destroyed six years of hard work in just a matter of weeks. Tourism is without a doubt a significant part of many national economies and a creator of a lot of jobs especially for low-skilled people, immigrants, and students, when compared to other business sectors (Maniga, 2020). When compared to the 2019 figures, tourism arrivals will be down about 20% to 30%, meaning a loss of 300 to 450 million of US\$ Dollars in receipts from Tourism says WTO (2020).

The fact that the tourism sector has a high number of small and medium companies can translate into more obstacles to overcome due to the pandemic (OECD, 2020). This means that these small and medium companies might not be able to survive due to the fact they were for over three months closed and with no income. Additionally, these companies have fewer resources and capital, the gap between these types of companies to big firms will be greater. Small and medium companies will not be able to compete with bigger firms due to the lack of resources (OECD, 2020). Another factor of concern is the seasonality created by tourism and instability for workers. Tourism companies sometimes opt for small and short contracts, for temporary work during the peak season, and with the pandemic, these temporary workers might lose their positions.

Governments are responding to the crisis by focusing their agendas and their attention on the following topics: epidemiology, containing measures, and economic and social considerations (OECD, 2020). As regards epidemiology, governments are focusing on how the virus is evolving and how governments are reacting to its behaviour. As for

measures for the containment of the virus, governments are very concerned about controlling the free movement of people and containing the spread of the virus by implementing measures for social distancing and while respecting sanitary controls. Lastly, concerning economic and social considerations, governments are trying to understand and control the movement of people. This is being done by allowing the movement of people for personal or professional reasons only and slowly granting more permissions to more people to move around.

As previously mentioned, tourism is one of the most important sectors of the world economy. It generates large revenue and provides lots of job opportunities. Additionally, it allows for the opportunity for the exchange of culture, the opportunity for education, social ranks and most importantly, it allows for the development of specific areas and regions. Thus, its benefits are quite important for the prosperity of nations and the global economy.

For countries in the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development the tourism sector plays a very important share in several country's GDP (OECD, 2020). For example, as seen in the figure below, tourism in Spain contributes to 11.8% of its GDP (Figure 5). In France, it represents a percentage of 7.4% and in Portugal percentage is 8.0% (OECD, 2020). In some country's specific regions, the risk of people losing their jobs and the market share decreases is even bigger. For example, the Ionian Islands in Greece, the Balearic and Canary Islands in Spain, and the Algarve region in Portugal, where tourism plays a very important role for the local businesses and economy being tourism, their main income generator and the one sector that creates the most jobs.

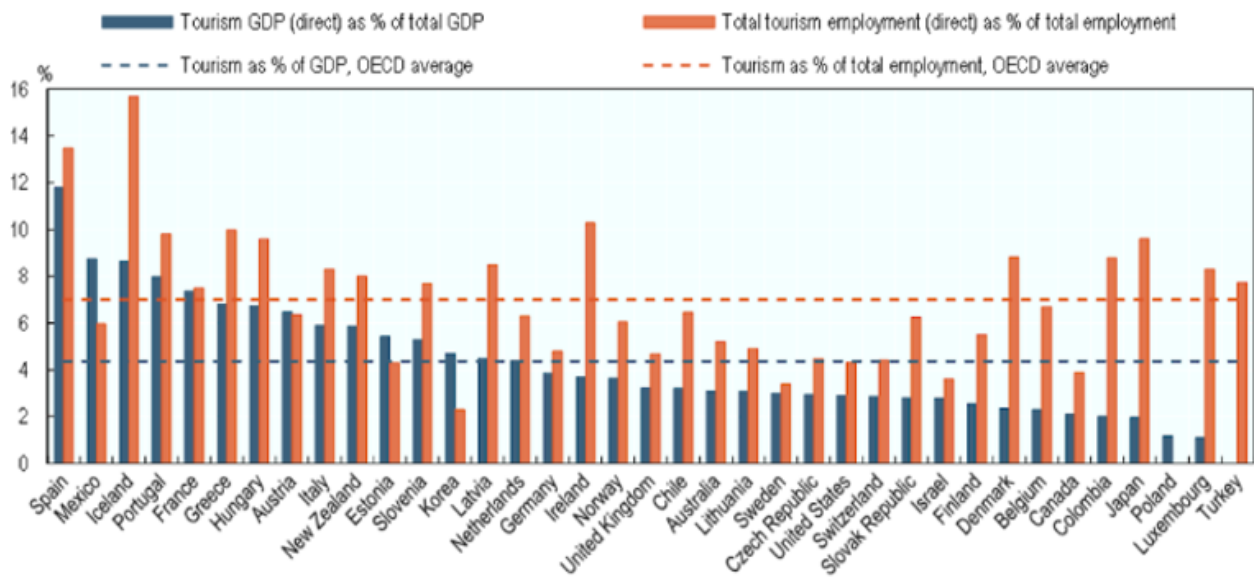


Figure 5 - Direct contribution of tourism in OECD economies

Source: OECD, 2020

As we can understand, not only Tourism generates great amounts of income but also creates a lot of new job positions and creates a lot of opportunities for young professionals and minorities that are losing their jobs due to the crisis created by the pandemic. Despite many difficulties for some popular regions, mentioned before, some rural and remote areas tend to be a safer place for holidays. As these areas have fewer positive cases of the virus and with much less free movement of people when compared to big cities. rural and remote areas are a safe place for holidays. These areas tend to have fewer positive cases of the virus and with much less free movement of people when compared to big cities.

2.3.6.4. An outlook to the different tourism sectors

It is true that, although tourism was highly affected by the pandemic, some sub-sectors of tourism will experience bigger losses than others and thus, will take longer to

recover from the crisis. For example, not all sectors within Tourism depend on too much human contact; a tour guide hosting a private tour with fewer people would probably not have as much difficulties as a tour hosted for large groups. When analysing the different sub-sectors, one can understand which sectors will have more difficulties to recover. Some of these sub-sectors are airline companies, accommodation companies, MICE (Meetings, Incentives, Congresses, and Exhibitions) and sports events, restaurants, and cruises.

Airlines: This sector stopped completely once governments and countries started to close their borders and implement travel restrictions. Although many people were still flying back to their country of origin, commercial flights stopped. IATA estimates that the Revenue Passenger Kilometre (RPK) will be 38% lower the present year than in the previous year, estimated to be a loss of around 252 billion US dollars (IATA, 2020). Alongside the airlines, the airports themselves are facing huge crises as well, with estimated losses of 76.6 billion US dollars in 2020 (ACI, 2020).

Accommodation: Most hotels and others related to accommodation were closed during the pandemic. Analysts believe in a drop of 50% of revenue in 2020 (OECD, 2020). Despite the fall in revenue, this sector must be one of the first to recover. Currently, there is a big effort being made by hotels and other types of accommodation to understand how to make their guests feel the safest while staying at their places.

MICE and Sports Events: One of the sub-sectors that will have difficulties to recover. To prevent the spread of the virus, governments applied some restrictions over crowds and gatherings. This, obviously, means that sports events and any kind of event have been cancelled. Examples are the UEFA EURO 2020 and the 2020 Summer Olympics in Japan. Weddings and any event that means a large number of people together in the same space. It is hard to predict how much of an economic impact this means but is estimated to be hundreds of billions of dollars (OECD, 2020).

Restaurants: Most restaurants were closed during the lockdown and those who were not, they were only open for take-away or delivery. This type of business has limited liquidity and the margins are quite small. After the reopening of the economy,

many restaurants will be forced to open outside patios as people will not be comfortable to eat inside as they prefer to eat outside.

Cruises: The sub-sector that was affected the most. Some experts say that cruises will not sail again until a vaccine is available. As Yamagishi (2020) affirms: “Cruise ships are often settings for outbreaks of infectious diseases because of their closed environment, contact between travellers from many countries, and crew transfers between ships”. The fact that the same people share the same space for days and even weeks is the perfect place for a virus of this sort to act. This sub-sector will have a very hard time to recover (Yamagishi, 2020).

2.3.6.5. Tourism sector after the pandemic

The tourism sector and those that work for it will take time to recover from the crisis created by the pandemic. The number of deaths and infections by Covid-19 keeps rising, and with that the rates of unemployment have increased worldwide as well (US Bureau of Labour Statistics, 2020). The state of the pandemic will encourage governors and specialists to rethink the tourism model.

With this reorganization, the positive aspects of the pandemic will come out. Such as the airline companies slowly doing the transition from old aircraft to newer and more efficient ones (Simple Flying, 2020). The popularity of video conferences has certainly increased during the pandemic as many people were either having online classes or doing meetings via the web. This means that most likely there will be more people working from home even after restrictions are lifted. This will decrease the demand for transportations thus reducing CO2 emissions (Banister & Stead, 2004). The pandemic was an excellent opportunity for people and companies to realize and separate essential from non-essential traveling and to prioritize.

The tourism sector and the economy overall will have a hard time recovering from the pandemic and the crisis that comes with it as seen in the figure below (Figure 6).

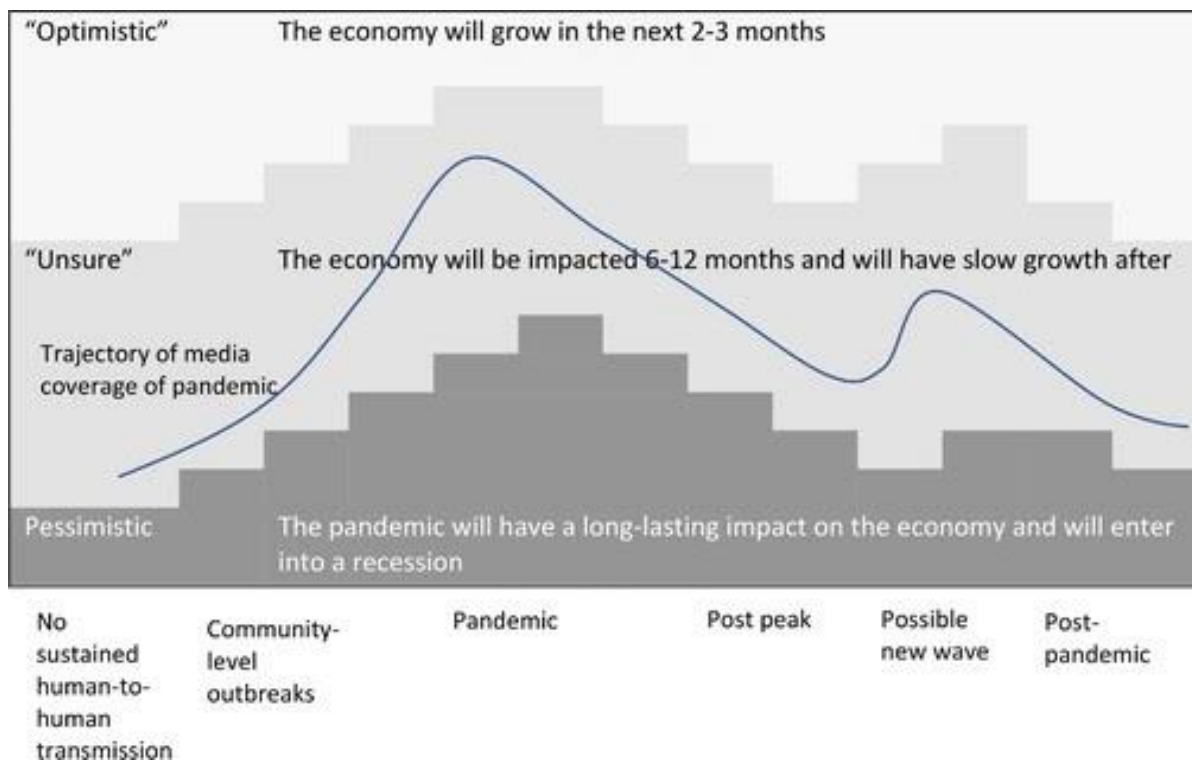


Figure 6 - Predictions on the future state of the economy after the pandemic

Source: Simple Flying, 2020

There is the optimistic, and the hardest to happen, that believes that the economy will grow in the next two to three months and maybe get back to where it was. Then, there is the “unsure” point of view, where it is believed the time frame for recovery could be between 6-12, this would be considered a slow recovery but a recovery, nonetheless. Lastly, there is the “pessimistic” overlook where it is believed that the negative effects of the pandemic are so vast that certain countries will enter a state of recession.

Chapter III – The Host Institution

This chapter is divided into four main topics and focuses on the host institution where the internship took place, Dixo's Oporto Apartments. This chapter explores the company and its background by giving an overlook of how the company started. The chapter also describes the company at the present, its activities, how it functions, and its staff and hierarchy. Moreover, this chapter also approaches the local accommodation theme, the sector in which the company operates. Giving an outlook to the concept, how it works, its perks as well as its opportunities and threats.

3.1 The company – Dixo's Oporto Apartments

3.1.1 Background

Dixo's Oporto Apartments is a tourism company that focuses its operation on short-term rental and property management. The head office is located in the heart of the historical centre of Porto, a few meters away from the São Bento train station and the Ribeira riverside area. The company's location is significant as Porto is the second-largest city in Portugal and one of the major urban areas of the Iberian Peninsula. The city has roughly 230.000 inhabitants and the metropolitan area has around 2.4 million people (World Population Review, 2019).

The area where the company has its headquarters was proclaimed in 1996 as a "World Heritage Site" by UNESCO (UNESCO, n.d.). A very well preserved and looked after area of the city and the region too. The Historic Centre is built along the cliffs of the city, overlooking the transition of the Douro River to the Atlantic Ocean in an urban area that is 2,000 years old (UNESCO, n.d.). The great number of different and eclectic monuments and buildings tells the history of those who lived and worked in the area. From the Romanesque style to the typical Portuguese Manueline style not forgetting the presence of the Gothic, Renaissance, Baroque and modern architecture that is also resembled in the facades of constructions around the city. Some of its landmarks are São João Theatre, the former prison "Cadeia da Relação", Palácio da Bolsa, São Bento railway station, Clérigos Tower, the famous bridge Ponte Dom Luiz I and the Monastery of Serra do Pilar (UNESCO, n.d.).

Dixo's Oporto Apartments has the advantage of having its operations centre right in the heart of the city, close to all major attractions and near the flux of tourists. The company owners started its first steps in the Tourism Industry in November of 2011. At the time, Joana, and Pedro Dixo, created Dixo's Oporto Hostel. One of the first hostels in the city of Porto, also located in the heart of the historical centre in one of the main streets of the city, Mouzinho da Silveira Street. The hostel was located in a protected building by UNESCO, with 4 floors and a terrace on the top with views overlooking the Douro river.

Hostels started to be a great success in Portugal at the beginning of the previous decade. Due to its low-cost and great quality, many travellers, especially younger ones, started choosing hostels as their preferred accommodation option. Although the first-ever hostel in Portugal was founded in 2005 in Lisbon, it was not until 2009 that Portugal passed the barrier of 20 hostels in the country (Volante, 2011).

Dixo's Oporto Hostel was a great success as being named one of the best hostels in the country. The hostel was on top three as the cleanest hostel in the world back in the year 2014. After five very successful years, the building was sold to a couple of investors right at the beginning of the real estate peak in the city.

3.1.2 The company at the present

Dixo's Oporto Apartments was founded in 2016 by Joana and Pedro Dixo and its services focus on property rental and management. Located in the heart of the historical centre of Porto at Rua da Bainharia number 92. The company is very experienced in all fields of tourism and very much capable of handling the demanding and challenging hospitality world. The company is organized into 7 different teams that support and maintain the functionality of the company daily:

- House preparation: The team, before every check-in. They are in charge to check if everything is immaculate and in perfect condition to receive guests. If there is something missing the person in charge makes sure to resolve the problem before the guest's arrival. as fast and as well as he/she can.

- **Reservation Management:** This team oversees securing and successfully completing new apartment contracts. Additionally, the team is also responsible for ensuring the decor and amenities of the apartment are in line with the company's guidelines such as to keep consistency. The team also manages a professional photo session such that the apartment can be listed on booking platforms such as Airbnb and Booking. However, the team's most important role is to manage all booking related details, such as booking confirmations and cancellations.
- **Check-in/ Check-out:** This is the most personalized part of the experience for guests. At the check-in, the staff in charge makes sure to welcome guests as best as he/she can, give instructions of the house, the amenities, and relevant information about the city of Porto and the neighbourhood. This team also arranges any sort of transportation needed from the airport or train stations to the apartments for check-in, or vice versa, from the apartment to the airport or train stations upon check-out. At check-out, the staff makes sure to provide anything that may be needed from the guests before their departure.
- **Host support:** The staff is ready to answer any emergency calls 24/7 and is constantly available for any type of contact. The company has mobile phones constantly on in case guests need anything or have any issue with the apartment of any matter.
- **Cleaning and Laundry:** The company has recently started working with its own cleaning staff, instead of the previously subcontracted cleaning services, so they can make sure and guarantee that the house is clean, tidy, and fresh for the new guests. The company also has their own private laundry service, that oversees washing and disinfecting all used or dirty laundry every day. They leave clean and fresh laundry every morning and collect the dirty laundry at the end of every day.

- **Maintenance:** The maintenance team is always prepared to solve or take care of any issues that any house might have during or between stays, such as heating issues, internet connection, water heater issues, etc. Also, the team makes periodic inspections of the houses to ensure everything is working properly.
- **Legal Framework:** This team focuses on helping apartment owners to register and deal with all bureaucracy needed to legalize the property at the city hall cabinets.

The company is composed of eight different staff elements. Three belonging to the back-office, two members managing check-ins and check-outs and the last three are members of the cleaning staff. The back-office staff deals with legal issues, finances of the company and overall managing of the company. Check-in and check-out staff manage the week of check-ins as well as host communication. Finally, the cleaning staff controls house preparation and cleaning of the same.

Dixo's Oporto Apartments began by managing six apartments. Now the company is responsible for over forty-five properties in total, all located in downtown Porto. A huge growth for the company that goes hand to hand with the investment being done in the city, especially in the real estate market. The properties that the company manages and/or owns vary from T0, T1, T2, and T3⁵. Most of the properties are T0, which are the bestselling spaces in Porto, and the ones most looked after by couples on Airbnb. The type T3 has also a lot of demand by bigger groups and families.

3.1.3 Alojamento Local

Alojamento Local (AL) are establishments that provide temporary accommodation services, namely for tourists, in establishments that do not meet the

⁵ The denomination T0 stands for the number of rooms the house has, for instance, T0 has no rooms as a T4 has four rooms. When the nomination T2+1, the house has two rooms and an extra one, this extra room has no windows hence why it is a T2+1 and not a T3. The denomination T0 stands for a studio apartment. T1 means one bedroom apartment and T2 means a two bedroom apartment.

legal requirements for tourism enterprises (Balcão Virtual, n.d.). AL provides services in exchange for a fee and if they meet all legal requirements. As an AL establishment, they can categorize as:

- House: consists of an autonomous building, of a single-family character;
- Apartment: consists of an autonomous fraction of a building or part of an urban building susceptible to independent use;
- Room: exploitation of local accommodation in the holder's residence (corresponding to his tax domicile) when the accommodation unit in the room and there are not more than three rooms;
- Accommodation Establishments: This modality is part of the “Hostel” term. Establishments of accommodation units consisting of rooms (Balcão Virtual, n.d.).

Accordingly, to the information found on the website (RNAL, 2018) , there were approximately 7.300 local accommodation places registered in the city of Porto, alone.

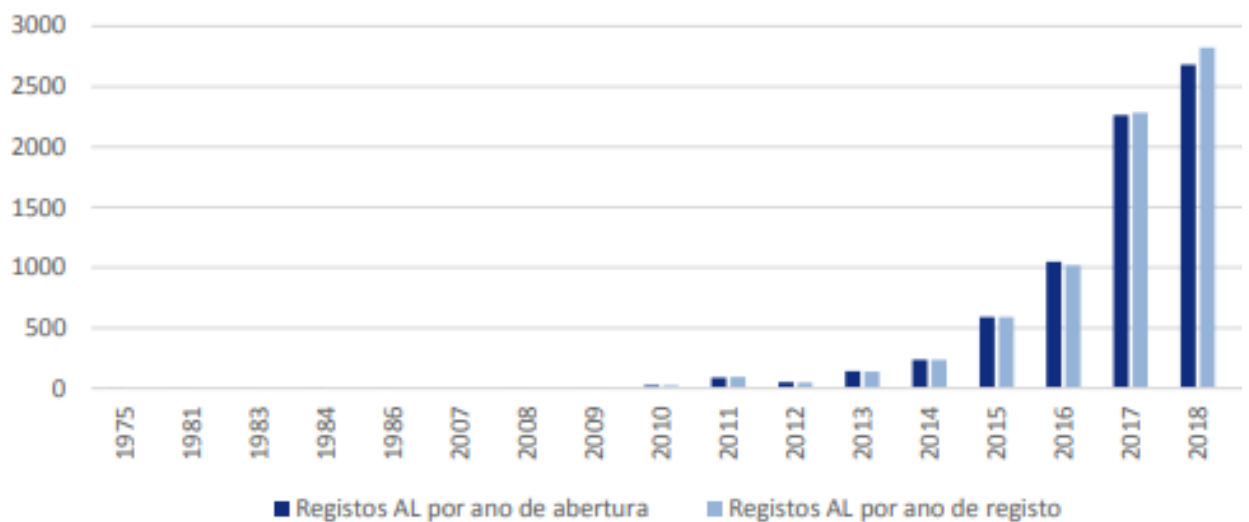


Figure 7-Number of AL per year of opening and year of registration

Source: RNAL, 2018

Analysing the graphic above, one can conclude that the services of local accommodation is a fairly recent trend (Figure 7). By the end of 2010 there were approximately thirty registered places as “AL”, corresponding to only 0,4% to what the market is today (RNAL, 2018). The business really started to grow in 2013 and onwards. In 2014 there were not even 250 registered properties, but in the year after that number more than doubled, surpassing the 500 registrations. By 2016 that number doubled again reaching a little over 1000 registrations. In 2017 the local accommodation was starting to reach serious numbers and in 2018 it reached its peak of over 2500 places registered in the city hall as local accommodation services (Figure X). To fully understand the demand for this sector of operation, one should see how the market is divided in terms of what it has to offer.

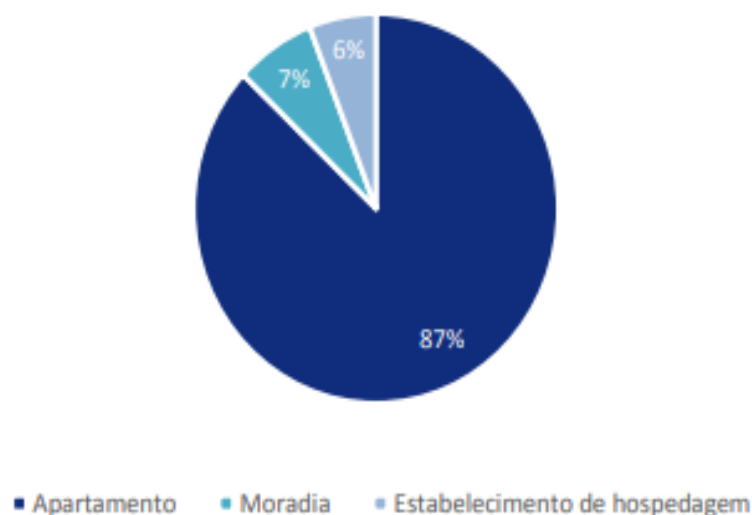


Figure 8 - Division of the market by home type

Source: RNAL, 2018

Considering Figure 8, one can conclude the most common type of accommodation the market has to offer is by far apartments, followed by singles houses and then overnight accommodation. The most common typology of apartments searched by travellers is without a doubt smaller ones, namely, T0 (studios and lofts) and T1 (one-bedroom apartments). This happens due to the fact most travellers and users of

platforms such as Airbnb are usually couples (Reference properties it is evident that the historical centre and surrounding areas are favoured by those investing in the houses and visitors that want to stay close to all monuments and important points of interest in the city. As seen in Figure 9, the township with the most local accommodations is, by far, comprehending a total of 71% (5 190 properties) in “União de Freguesias de Cedofeita, Santo Ildefonso, Sé, Miragaia, São Nicolau e Vitória” (RNAL, 2018). This is because this township accounts for most of the downtown area of the city of Porto, which is the closest area to monuments, sightseeing areas, and other touristic sites. Thus, it is the preferred location for tourists to stay. With a smaller number, Bonfim township has a total of 962 local accommodations corresponding to a total of 13%. In third place comes “União de freguesias de Lordelo do Ouro e Massarelos” with a total of 388 properties, which represents 5% of the total (Figure Y). The township of Paranhos and “União de freguesias de Aldoar, Foz do Douro e Nevogilde” have 292 and 182 properties respectively, followed by the townships of Campanhã and Ramalde with a total of 128 and 116 respectively.

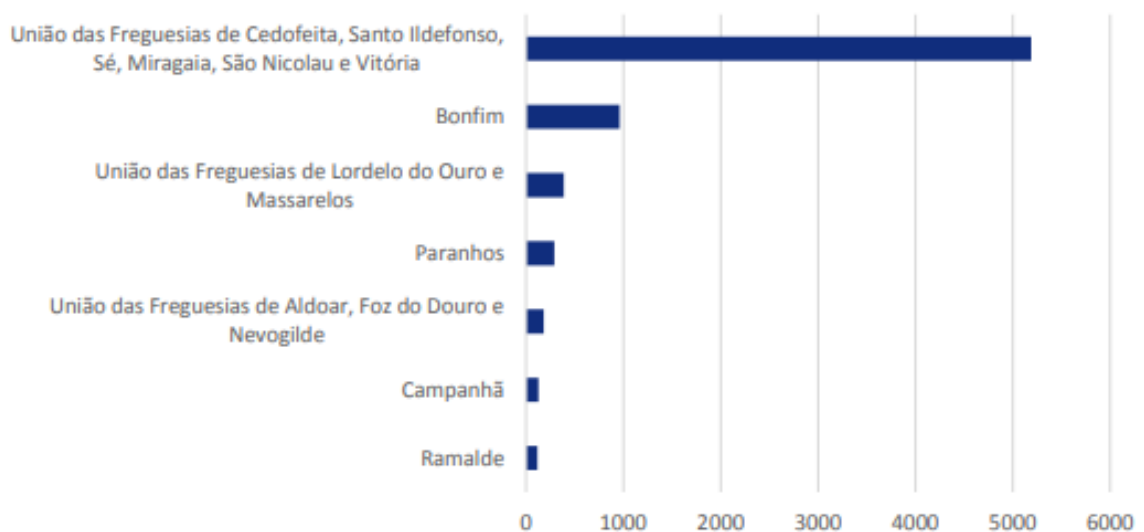


Figure 9- Number of local accommodations by townships in Porto

Source: RNAL, 2018

A very important factor that one must have in mind when discussing the importance of tourism for the city of Porto and its culture, is the major renovations that

are being done, especially in the historical centre. It is notable the amount of money that is being invested to preserve the city and improve it by giving it wave and new movement to city centres by tourists, visitors, and investors. For the locals and for the economy of the city that creates a boost for local shops, restaurants, small businesses, and others. In the figure below, Figure 10, one can see the number of renovations/new buildings that happened in the city between the years of 2011 and 2018.

The first impression one can take is that the number of renovations is by far superior to the number of new buildings. Another conclusion is the townships/areas of the city where the major number of rehabilitations/new buildings happen. The “União das Freguesias de Cedofeita, Santo Ildefonso, Sé, Miragaia, São Nicolau e Vitória” is by far the area where the most renovations happen, with over 1000 of permits for renovations" (RNAL, 2018). This is true, due to the fact of the number of abandoned houses and buildings one could see in the city centre 10 years ago and due to the fact of being the main area where tourists and visitors stay when visiting the city. The area where the second most number of rehabilitation happens, somewhere around 700 permits, is in the “União das Freguesias de Aldoar, Foz do Douro e Nevogilde” due to its proximity to the river/beach area and for being a very pleasant area to live or stay. These two areas are followed by “Paranhos” with a bit over 400 permits, “Bonfim” and “União de Freguesias de Lordelo do Ouro e Massarelos” with almost the same number of permits of around 380. Lastly, the two areas with the least number are “Ramalde” and “Campanhã” respectively, where big residential areas are located.

One curious aspect one can understand from Figure 10 is the difference in the number of reconstructions and new buildings. The number of new buildings is by far smaller than reconstructions. This might happen because the cost of rebuilding is cheaper than building from scratch and the time it saves by rebuilding than creating something new, from planning to its execution (RNAL, 2018). The largest number of new buildings happened in “União de Freguesias de Aldoar, Foz do Douro e Nevogilde” with over 100 permits, and the area with the second largest number was “União das Freguesias de Cedofeita, Santo Ildefonso, Sé, Miragaia, São Nicolau e Vitória” with somewhere around 50 permits (RNAL, 2018). The conclusion taken from here is that the city centre has seen more reconstruction happen and areas closer to the front line of the river/ocean have seen an increase in the number of new buildings.

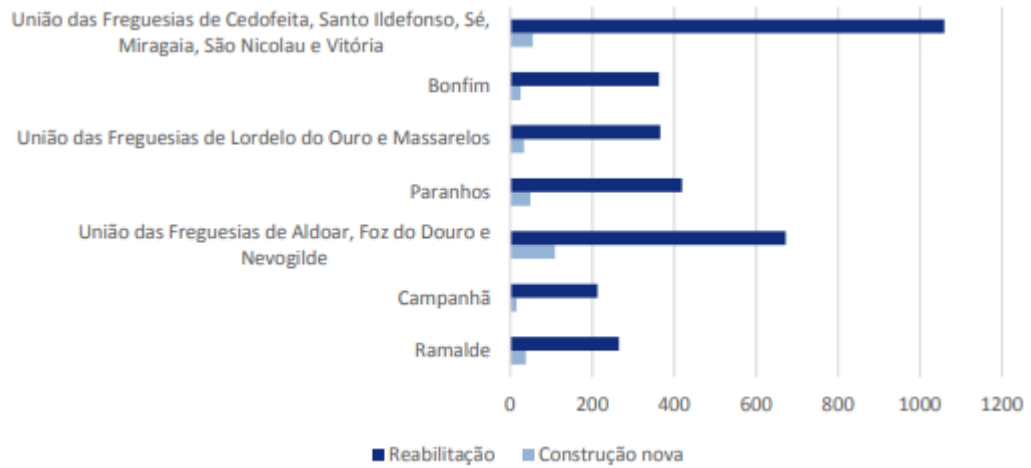


Figure 10-Number of permits for rehabilitation and construction per township

Source: CMP, 2019

Chapter IV – The Internship

This chapter will examine the internship at Dixo's Oporto Apartments. The chapter is divided into subchapters that will cover topics related to the internship such as the plan, the internship framing and aims, and tasks performed during the internship. The tasks performed were both in the office setting and in a field environment. This chapter presents all details of the internship.

4.1 Internship plan

The working plan for the Internship had a total amount of 400 hours and a weekly load of 25 hours from February until the end of June.

On the first days of the internship, the plan was traced, as well as the tasks that were supposed to be done throughout the months of internship. All main tasks and activities performed during the internship can be seen in the table below (Table 1). Eventually, the internship had to be suspended due to the pandemic caused by the severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2 (SARS-COV-2), otherwise known as Covid-19.

Date	Task/ Activity
5 th of February	Beginning of the internship
6 th of February	Planification of the activities and schedule
17 th of February to 21 st of February	Training new employee to the company
17 th of March	Company suspends its activities due to the pandemic caused by Covid-19
19 th of March	Organize and plan remote work
15 th of April	Suspension of the internship
22 nd of June	Resume of the internship
1 st of July	Collecting house information/stock
13 th of July	Creating and design house guides
31 st of July	End of the internship

Table 1 - Plan of activities of the Internship

4.2 Expectations and aims

The idea of an internship at an Dixo's Oporto Apartments presented itself after being mentioned during an in-class discussion. It was described as an opportunity to work at a tourism-based company and therefore explore the international environment. The most appealing aspect was to gain insight into the mechanics of a Tourist company and work together and get an idea of the functions of small, family-owned company. Additionally, it was presented as an interesting area of work because of the naturally intercultural environment and relations that are offered at the company.

The internship at Dixo's Oporto Apartments was carried out in the context of a curricular internship during the second year of the master's program in Intercultural Studies for Business at ISCAP under a signed contract agreement. In this contract, a total duration of four hundred hours was agreed by both, the intern and Dixo's apartments, to be done between the 5th of February and the 31st of July 2020. In terms of working hours per week, these were agreed by both the intern and the company resulting in an average of twenty-five hours per week, five hours every weekday. The work was agreed to be done within Dixo's facilities. However, this entailed moving around the city centre of Porto as Dixo's facilities include the apartments that are spread out across the city centre.

On February 5th of 2020, the intern officially started the internship at Dixo's Oporto Apartments. The schedule agreed on by both the intern and the supervisor was of five days per week, 5 hours on each day, with an hour of lunch included.

Eventually, because of the worldwide pandemic, the internship plan was interrupted. The changes brought on by the Covid-19 pandemic began on March 15th, however, Dixo's apartments did not discontinue their work right away. In fact, during the first month of the pandemic, Dixo's made themselves available to offer free accommodation to health staff, namely doctors. Later, the internship was interrupted on April 15th and resumed after the government decided to lift some restrictions on the 22nd of June. This represented a setback of nine weeks in terms of progress done to complete the agreed hours of internship. Thus, the hours that were to be worked during those nine weeks had to be compensated later. As a result, the internship took longer than expected to be able to complete as many hours and as many tasks as possible, thus officially

ending on July 31st, instead of the end of June as stated in the internship contract agreement.

The following is a list of objectives that were set to be completed during the internship:

- Improve communication skills, both written and spoken;
- Improve business communication, written and spoken;
- Understand the operations of a small company;
- Learn and improve management skills.

Initially, the goals of the internship were to improve a specific area of the company. Among these goals was the creation of a database of potential clients, individuals, groups, or companies as well as business partners. For this, it was needed for a connection and a relationship with new clients that would be travelling to the city of Porto and possibly stay at one of the company locations. This was one of the main aims of the internship, to create a directory of clients that, every time they would travel to Porto, they would contact the company to take care of the house booking process. Unfortunately, this was not possible due to the pandemic and the temporary suspension of the internship. During this period the priority of the company was to focus on other tasks, such as cancellations, cleaning improvements, and hosting medical staff.

4.3 Tasks performed during the internship

The internship at Dixo's Apartments was very dynamic, always providing different tasks to do. Some tasks were more practical and people-oriented, which meant more fieldwork, and others required more time in the office in front of the computer writing emails, editing, organizing files, organizing schedules and so on. The following section provides a detailed summary of the tasks performed during the internship.

4.3.1 Office work

It can be said that about half of the internship, if not more, was related to office and computer work. Eventually, during the pandemic and declaration of a state of emergency, the plan and tasks changed drastically. Moving the place of work from the office to home and rearranging completely the plan that was once set at the beginning of the internship.

The first task assigned at the beginning of the internship was to plan the activities set for the new few months based on the goals previously mentioned. the tasks for the next few months. An overall overview of the goals of the internship and what is supposed to achieve by the end of the internship. The intern met the cleaning staff, set his working space, and logged into all accounts and software used by the company.

Weekly Organization: This task consists of organizing the week of check-ins by day. For example, set the arrival hour with the guests, through communication via Airbnb app chat or email, and inform the cleaning staff so the apartment is ready and clean when guests arrive. This is a task that must be done every Monday to organize and prepare the week as well as to know how many check-ins there are every day. Throughout the week the list would be updated with new or cancelled reservations.

Training new employee: The intern's next task was to train the new employee that had just been added to the team, Inês, set to start working on the 17th of February. The training task was performed for one week, Monday to Friday and the goal was to give a general tour of the working space, office, and laundry area. As well as all apartment locations and specific information of each apartment. Information such as codes for entering the apartments, Wi-Fi passwords, and other specific features.

Invoicing: Learning how to send invoices, which are a list of goods and services provided by the company, with a statement of the total sum for those same goods and services. This is also a task that is mandatory to be done every two or three days a week. So, adding to the previous tasks, of organizing the week of check-ins and check-out, sending invoices was a task that the intern was doing every week.

Guest information check: Another important task that also needed to be done every week was sending guests information to the “*Serviço de Estrangeiros e Fronteiras*” SEF. This service is integrated into the Ministry of International Affairs whose role is to control immigration and asylum in Portugal. With that said, it is mandatory to register all the information in a form of all guests the company welcomes and send it back to SEF.

Cancellations: Once the pandemic caused by the virus Covid-19 started, travellers and tourists began to worry and concern about the fast spread of the virus. A lot of guests that had already booked their holidays and trips had to cancel. With this, the company started to receive great amounts of phone calls, emails, and requests to cancel their trips and get refunds. This task was definitely not planned due to the unpredictability of the whole situation, but it involved a lot of effort from the whole team to answer all requests and understand. So, for almost two weeks the team was focused on replying to emails, answering phone calls, processing reservations, and refunds.

The pandemic caused by the virus Covid-19 has dramatically changed the cleaning methods people and companies use, especially in the hospitality field. The company changed how cleaning is done respecting the rules from the local health authorities. The task here was for the intern to organize the cleaning staff while respecting all new rules:

- Venting the rooms before cleaning: Leaving all windows open for at least 20 minutes helps the air concentrated in the apartment/house to circulate;
- Washing hands thoroughly before and after each cleaning: For at least, 20 seconds or, if not possible, use disinfectant with at least 60% of alcohol;
- Wearing disposable gloves while cleaning;

- Cleaning first followed by disinfection: Using the appropriate cleaning products and utensils to clean, like grease and bathrooms followed by disinfecting using appropriate chemical products;
- Using the right disinfectant: Using only products with over 70% of alcohol and registered by local health authorities;
- Stocking up on paper towels, disinfectant wipes, and other disposable cleaning supplies;
- Rugs, sofas, and curtains must be very well cleaned as well due to its soft surface;
- Washing all sheets and linen in the program with the highest temperature recommended by the manufacturer: including hand and bath towels, kitchen towels and always using gloves while touching on the dirty linen;
- After using the vacuum cleaner, this should be cleaned and disinfected.

It is also very important to pay extra attention to those frequently touched surfaces like:

General:

Doorknobs, fans and lamp chains, garbage and recycling bins, hairdryers, ironing boards and iron, keys, light switches, railings, remote controls, tabletops, thermostats, windows.

Kitchen:

Appliances: coffee maker, oven, pressure cooker, toaster, cabinet handles, and pulls. Condiments: oil, salt, and pepper shakers, commonly used spices, and containers. Hard-backed chairs, kitchenware that is not dishwasher safe: ceramic bowls, kids' plastic ware, and sinks.

Bathroom:

Faucet handles, shampoo, conditioner, body wash, soap dispensers, shower curtains and doors, showers and tubs, sinks, and toilets.

Bedroom:

Hangers, luggage racks, and nightstands.

Cleaning appliances:

Dishwashers, vacuum cleaners, washer/dryer units.

Kids items:

Highchairs, portable cribs, playpens, and toys.

Other amenities:

Bikes, books, surfboards, board games.

All information mentioned above was written and sent to the cleaning staff, so they were informed and paid extra attention to those details. Also, the cleaning plan had to be modified. Before the pandemic, cleaning staff would clean the apartments right after the guest's check-out, to have the apartment clean faster for the next check-in, usually on the same day. After the pandemic, the rules changed, and cleaning staff would only enter the apartment two hours after the check-out and would only go to open the windows to ventilate. The cleaning would only be done the day after checkout. With these new rules, planning the cleaning schedule would take much more time and trips by the staff. All this was organized by the intern.

Once the pandemic started to hit hard and businesses started to close their doors and the government declared mandatory lockdown to everyone, the company closed its doors on the 16th of March. After that and since the apartments were empty since the government closed its borders, the company started to allocate doctors in the empty apartments. The task was to get in touch with doctors and nurses that were in the first line of fighting the pandemic caused by the virus Covid-19 and give them a place to

stay. Since these professionals could not be working at the hospitals and go back home to their families due to the possibility of transmitting the virus to their families.

The company was one of the first to allow and say yes to the movement of shared apartments for tourism to those who were fighting the virus, doctors, nurses, and others. The task here was to organize who was going to each apartment and deliver keys or share codes for self-check-in to these professionals. This was with no doubt one of the hardest tasks to do due to the sensibility of the situation and the difficulty of understanding how long the lockdown would take. People in general were scared also because most of them have not seen or lived something similar.

The last task that was performed in the office environment, after the lockdown restrictions were lifted and the internship restarted, was to design and create the house guides. House guides are mandatory by law and an excellent way for hosts to present their house and their city as well as a welcome to guests. Also, a way to get familiarized by the house rules as well as learn about the city by locals thus creating a better experience. The idea of the house guide is to give information in detail to guests. information such as restaurants, monuments, museums, experiences, services, and others. All suggestions are personal choices and chosen by locals and the staff. The restaurants are sorted by type of food from typical Portuguese food to fish and Porto landmark, Francesinha, where there is a list of places just for the dish. All museums of the city are as well presented in the guide, with a small description and opening and closing hours. Also, the information of all-important sites to see for example Clérigos tower and church, São Bento railway station, Ponte Luiz I alongside with a small description and its working hours.

Services such as the closest post office, pharmacy, and others are as well present on the house guide with its working hours, as well as the distance from the apartment. The house guide is in four languages, Portuguese, English, French, and Spanish (Annex B). My task was then to first write the guide in Portuguese, with its structure, and with the convenient layout. After the guide was written in Portuguese, it was necessary to translate to the three languages mentioned above. The guide was then divided by languages containing the same information in about ten pages. The guide was on a total of around forty-five pages. Throughout the process of translation, the intern had no

major difficulties, finding some words and phrases hard to translate but overall was a smooth process. In terms of time dedicated to making the guide, it took about a month between editing, writing, translating, and correcting.

4.3.2 Field Work

Gathering information: Collecting information from all apartments in all locations. This means going to every single apartment, collecting various information, and checking the apartment as well as its conditions. This was made with an online document where all details were in a sort of list, and while checking the apartments the goal was to select from that list what the apartment has or not, for example, the type of coffee machine the apartment possesses. Information such as: Type of TV connection (HDMI1/2), coffee Machine (Nespresso, Dolce Gusto or other), A/C and heating, cleaning tools (mop, vacuum cleaner, iron, etc), safety features (fire extinguisher, CO2 detector, fire detector, etc), hand sanitizer, house guide, oven and microwave, kitchenware (plates, cups, cutlery, etc), Wi-Fi display (name and password), linen and towels, washroom amenities (toilet paper, hand soap, shower gel, shampoo, make-up removing wipes, etc.), apartment keys, complaints book, maps, tourist information and eventual damages.

This task was very important to create a solid database of each apartment. Understand the stock of every house and if something is missing or needs to be fixed. With all this information the company has full control of the stock of each place, individually and can also have access to it online. In total there are forty-two apartments across the centre of Porto. Every apartment has an individual sheet with all stock and information, updated.

Gathering geographical information: After checking each apartment, the next step was to check the area where the apartment or building is located at. This was a crucial task, so the database can be complete. The information I was looking for was the

closest: parking and prices, supermarket, pharmacy, post office, police station, restaurants, shopping areas, markets, tourist information office, and ATM's.

The information collected is critical. When talking and replying to guests, the goal is to give the most correct and accurate information. During guests stays, one might need to use the post office or a pharmacy, so providing that information is very important. Having all those details displayed in the apartment and online, when booking, is a plus and a convenience. When gathering that information, the intern also had a checklist of the services the intern had to check, mentioned above. The intern had to check the name, address, working hours, and distance from the apartment. For example, for the pharmacy, the closest one is Farmácia Parente, located at Rua das Flores 114, open from 9 AM to 7 PM and it is a 3-minute walk from the apartment, approximately 350 meters. After collecting all the information, I edited and updated the house guide as well as each apartment page on Airbnb and Booking and other booking channels.

Organizing cleaning staff: This assignment was a mix of field and office work and was to organize the cleaning and disinfecting of apartments. After the pandemic caused by the new coronavirus Covid-19, a lot of new rules were implemented for the cleaning and disinfection of all tourism and hospitality businesses. All companies are obligated to create a cleaning and hygiene plan that must be visible in each apartment. The plan must include the person responsible for the cleaning and frequency of cleaning, how many times the apartment was cleaned during a specific period. This plan was elaborated for every single apartment and taking in account the availability of each place. The intern role was to organize with the cleaning staff who and when they would clean and maintain the apartment and which products they will be using. Create a sheet for the staff to sign every time one of the tasks is completed. Either a full cleaning after a guest stay or a maintenance cleaning when the apartment would be empty for more than three consecutive days. After organizing and discussing schedules and activities it was necessary to fix the plan in a visible place in the apartment. As DGS (Direção Geral de Saúde) advises, “At this stage, cleaning frequency should be increased by using recommended cleaning products”(Observador, 2020). DGS also recommends that every apartment has its own cleaning equipment. So that was another small task that I had to perform. Go online and purchase the cleaning utensils for each apartment.

Including a bucket, mops, disinfectant, and others. As they arrived at the office, it was necessary to go and drop them off at the apartment.

Besides all this work, eventually, the intern had to do some of the considered normal and constant work of a tourism company. Do some check-ins (handling apartment keys, give small tours to the apartment and its commodities as well as the rules and the city with some tips), help fixing some common house problems such as wi-fi malfunctions, heating system or fans, problems with hot water, and other usual house problems.

Chapter V – The degree and the internship

In this chapter, a deep analysis of both the internship and the degree can be found. An analysis of the objectives of the internship and if these were achieved or not as well as a resume of the internship itself. After that, an analysis of the degree and how it has helped to successfully finish and successfully accomplish the internship.

5.1- Analysis of the internship

The internship allowed me to understand how the company functions at all levels and observe all details on how to run a small-sized company. Not only that, but it also enabled me to provide some proper work to the company itself and create tangible documents that will be used in the future by the staff. From databases and house guides, all of those will be a huge help for the company and for sure will improve its functionality in some respects.

As mentioned before the internship had the following aims and goals:

- Improve language skills (English, Spanish and French);
- Improve communication skills, both written and spoken;
- Improve business communication, written and spoken;
- Understand the operations of a small company;
- Learn and improve management skills.

When it comes to the aims and goals, previously set, they were successfully achieved, some of them better than the others. However, I believe the internship was a success.

By analysing each of the points of the framing and aims, the first one, on improving language skills, I believe that the internship really helped me, especially in the writing aspect, with the translation of the house guide in English, Spanish and French. The second point, on improving communication skills, I believe this one was one of the least successful during the internship. Despite being in constant contact with guests from many different nationalities, there really was not room for improvement, the intern feels that the skills the intern had before the internship, were the same at the

end of it. The third point, improving business communication, was not as successful as the intern predicted at the beginning due to the lack of opportunities to put in practice this business communication, the few times the intern had the opportunity to put in practice this type of communication was through emails. The fourth point was for sure where the intern improved the most.

Throughout the internship, the intern had the opportunity to be in contact with all operations of the company during his time in the office. Be in touch with all processes of how to operate new reservations, how to organize check-ins, check-outs, and organize cleaning staff schedules. Besides these tasks, the intern had the opportunity to dig in a little bit in the economic part of the company by doing some invoicing and managing small payments. The last aim of the internship, but not less important, the intern had the opportunity to improve his skills on the management levels. This means, organizing schedules for both guests (check-ins and check-outs) and the cleaning staff, (cleaning and disinfecting schedules). Besides this, all information from the moment of reservation by a guest, until his check-out, would pass by the intern eyes, being responsible to allocate and communicate with the guest. Also, when some problems and errors would happen with guests, the intern would be many times responsible to manage the situation and create the best possible solution for both parties.

Overall and with all tasks performed during the internship the intern really believes the work performed at the company was a success. Despite last-minute changes due to situations one cannot control, all experience went well and really helped to improve the intern skills at various levels. Not only that but the intern feels that the company has benefited from the intern's work throughout the internship. This means, with all work done in some fields by the intern, the company will have the easier and fastest access to information collected and organized by the intern.

5.2 – The Internship and the Masters

The internship made it possible to open doors to the intercultural world, to the tourism world where contact with people from all sorts of cultures and countries is constant. The Master's degree as well as the internship were rich in intercultural connections and movements, from English Culture to Mandarin Culture, in which one could become aware of how to deal with the most diverse people and cultures from the most diverse places. The Master's and the internship were aligned in that sense. When it comes to the business side of both the masters and the internship, the intern believes that would be fruitful for both parties if there was more in-depth analysis and work on this field. The intern assumes that the degree lacked on the business subjects and analysis and with that, the internship could not go very deep in the sense of business and economics. The internship could be much more profuse if there was a bigger and better sense of the economy and business fields in the Master's degree. Even though the intern was able to get some insight into the economic side of the company by showing interest in how to perform some tasks that require knowledge in the economic field. The intern made a lot of questions to the person in charge of that department and was able to get some information, necessary to be able to do those same tasks.

The degree is with no doubt the perfect place and opportunity to really understand that people must work together and get in touch with others. To fulfil that need of working together, one must understand and accept all people. Understand that not all come from the same background, have the same opportunities, and share the same vision and customs. In that matter, the Master's degree really goes deep on analysing those specific topics. How to correctly approach someone, how to interact with them, and how to become evolved with them. The degree helps people that lack in that sense, gaining enough knowledge to be successful in dealing with those situations. And with the practicality of the internship, the intern was able to put all that knowledge into practice and really expand the knowledge previously learned into real life situations. By dealing with all sorts of people and all sorts of situations in the intercultural field.

The degree goes even deeper in a peculiar aspect, improvise, and adapt to new and unpredictable situations. The fact that the pandemic really turned the world upside

down, and in the intern situation as well, the Master's somehow has been preparing his students to adapt to new situations. Of course, no one predicted a world pandemic and a lockdown, but the degree has been teaching his students to constantly adapt to new situations, due to the continuous movement of people and cultures. The internship on the other side was important to create and improve autonomous work as well as responsibility. The degree can only teach someone those two capacities until a certain level, but the practical job, the internship, really can improve those capacities to the next level.

In the end, the intern considers that the Master's and the internship were aligned perfectly, creating an efficient and well-succeeded formation for the intern. This was only possible due to a great job by the teaching staff and the environment of constant help and willingness at the company that turned the internship into a success.

5.3 – Future aspirations

When pondering about the future, the intern believes that the area of study of the degree is certainly a wise and prosperous field to continue the professional path. When it comes to the field of operations which the internship was in, tourism, the intern most likely will not follow that field of work. This does not mean that the intern will completely disregard the opportunity to work in the tourism field, but the master's degree has opened new doors to other areas of interest. Areas like a business and intercultural business really arouse interest for the intern to pursue those areas and if possible, keep studying and improve knowledge in those fields.

With the pandemic hitting hard the tourism field, the intern believes that finding a good job and pursuing a good career in the area will be complicated for the next couple of years. By pursuing other areas, besides tourism, the intern believes that it is wise to pursue other areas that might have better prospects for the future. The intern believes that the tourism field will recover from its current situation, but it will not reach the same stage it was before and not with the same levels and numbers as the past. When it comes to intercultural relations and business, these might not happen at the same intensity. As seen in previous chapters, business meetings and trips might be reduced for only necessary, but they will keep happening and intercultural relations will

rise again simply because they are necessary and because the world is very well connected and intercultural relations are indeed needed.

The degree was indeed important to open new doors, meet new people and meet new realities and was super important to make students understand that not everyone thinks alike, and every individual has his own background that will influence his/her behaviour throughout their life. The masters and all staff involved were very keen in transmitting that knowledge a little bit across all subjects, always stepping in other shoes and being humble. The intern believes those were some of the best teachings by the teaching staff that will for sure help the future of the intern.

Chapter VI – Conclusion

The Internship at Dixo's Oporto Apartments was without a doubt a great opportunity for the intern to gain knowledge at several stages as well as new perspectives of the job market and the market opportunities and threats. The internship allowed the intern to gain and improve new skills and understand as well as get involved in the work environment. The internship let the intern put in practice the theory learned during the course across all subjects.

From attending Master's degree, and, as mentioned before, the intern was able to put in practice knowledge from some specific subjects in the internship. Curricular units such English Culture for Business, Entrepreneurship, Technologies of Intercultural Communication, German Culture for Business, Intercultural Economics Relations, Culture and Development, really helped the intern to put in practice the knowledge and learning acquired in the degree into the internship. Throughout the internship, the several activities and tasks performed by the intern were many times successfully achieved due to previous knowledge that was learned during the degree. The theoretical framework revealed itself very important for the internship. Being able to conjugate both theoretic and practical aspects revealed itself a major key for the success of both curricular activities. The degree really prepares students at high level to communicate well and respecting others and their beliefs and backgrounds. The company where the internship was developed appreciates and needs people that have conscious of intercultural communication and that are prepared at the highest level to carry out those activities. The tasks developed during the internship were all a challenge, some more than others, and all important at different degrees for a better and improved function of the company database.

The internship was highly influenced by the pandemic caused by the Covid-19. What was once planned for the next few months of work at the company changed completely in a matter of weeks. From working at the office and have new work every day to move to working at home and having no work to do for weeks. This change has completely influenced the whole internship, strategy, and plan traced at the beginning. Firstly, before the pandemic, the plan was mostly to prepare the company and the staff for the summer season, high season, where the occupancy numbers reach its peak and basically is the season with the most movement and where companies work better.

There was a lot of expectation for that time of the year due to great predictions made for the 2020 year at the tourism sector and how busy it was going to be, with loads of events, festivals, and activities. Great investment was being done, the company, by adding new elements to the staff and improving organization methods and databases. Due to the pandemic, this plan changed drastically and dramatically. From adding new staff to cut down in employees, from having apartments fully booked for the summer to have over one hundred cancellations, the pandemic has changed a lot of things. Once the mandatory lockdown was demanded by the government and the company closed its doors, the intern had to change its place of work. From the office to home and from having a structured tasks plan to having the activities suspended for unknow period. The pandemic really made people and the intern to understand that plans can change unexpectedly, and one cannot predict the future. Despite this unpredictable event, the intern believes that the internship, and by the feedback received from the staff, was a success. The intern was able to perform all tasks that he was assigned despite some difficulties. Difficulties in some tasks performed such as the house guide where the intern struggled translating the guide in three languages, especially in the French and Spanish language which the intern does not have the same comfort as the English language. Other than that, the intern did not have any major difficulties performing the other tasks that were assigned to him.

When it comes to the future, the intern believes that the degree in Intercultural Studies for Business and its teaching staff prepared their students at the highest level to face the intercultural world and its challenges. By preparing its students at intercultural relations and communications, the intern was able to perform his internship in a very positive note. The internship was the perfect place to put the knowledge learned during the course into practice, by being in constant communication and relating with the foreign market and other cultures and people.

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