

THE SEA AS A CONNECTION BETWEEN RESIDENTS AND TOURISTS IN COASTAL DESTINATIONS: A CASE IN ALGARVE

O MAR COMO ELO DE LIGAÇÃO ENTRE RESIDENTES E TURISTAS EM DESTINOS COSTEIROS: UM CASO NO ALGARVE

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ABSTRACT

Coastal regions involve a set of interactions between tourists and residents, which implies that management and marketing strategies should take into account both stakeholders. Indeed, one of the greatest challenges of destination management organizations is to understand that they serve not only tourists and stakeholders directly related to tourism, but also the local community. Thus, the central purpose of this study is to measure the destination image of both tourists' and residents' perspectives, identifying the major aspects of agreement and disagreement.

The data was collected in Lagos, one of the 16 municipalities of the Algarve (South Portugal), which, due to its coastal location, offers sun-beach tourism. Furthermore, due to historical, cultural and economic reasons, the sea has been a factor of identity for the coastal communities in the region. The empirical investigation includes a mixed methodology, with the use of open-ended questions followed by the application of a structured questionnaire to both tourists and residents.

The results meet the growing need to diversify the destination supply depending on "sun and beach", aiming at local sustainable development by focusing on the cultural component and the sea as an important attribute of the destination.

Keywords: Destination Image; Coastal Tourism; Sea; Residents; Algarve.

RESUMO

As regiões costeiras envolvem um conjunto de interacções entre turistas e residentes, implicando que as estratégias de gestão e marketing contemplem ambos os stakeholders. Desta forma, um dos grandes desafios das organizações responsáveis pela gestão do destino é compreender que servem não apenas os turistas e os públicos relacionados com o turismo, mas também a comunidade local. Assim, o objectivo central do presente estudo é medir a imagem do destino na perspectiva de turistas e de residentes, identificando os principais aspectos de concordância e de divergência.

A recolha dos dados foi realizada em Lagos, um dos 16 municípios do Algarve (Sul de Portugal), que aliado à sua localização costeira oferece turismo de sol e praia. Ainda, devido a razões históricas, culturais e económicas, o mar tem sido um factor de identidade das comunidades costeiras da região algarvia. A investigação empírica inclui uma metodologia mista, com a aplicação de questões abertas, seguidas de um questionário estruturado, ambos dirigidos a turistas e a residentes.

Os resultados apontam para a crescente necessidade de diversificar a oferta dos destinos dependentes do produto “sol e praia”, visando o desenvolvimento local sustentável, com foco na componente cultural e no mar como um importante atributo do destino.

Palavras-chave: Imagem de Destino; Turismo Costeiro; Mar; Residentes; Algarve.

JEL Classification: M31

1. INTRODUCTION

Taking into account the continuing expansion of the tourism sector and the opportunities arising from the current international crisis, it becomes important to create strategies to develop competitive destinations. Indeed, destinations compete among them, in an environment where the supply is becoming progressively more similar and communication strategies are increasing towards the same market segments (Pike and Ryan, 2004). Therefore, if tourism marketing aims to attract people to particular places, the challenge lies in the differentiation based on attributes, tangible or intangible, allowing the development of a solid branding strategy around destinations (Kotler, Asplund, Rein and Haider, 1999; Phelps, 1986; Pike and Ryan, 2004).

Specifically, coastal regions offer the sea as a special attraction to people, not only as residents but also as tourists, looking for escape and pleasure during holidays. This phenomenon continues to increase around the world in countries such as Portugal. In fact, the sea has over the centuries shaped the lives and the history of Portuguese people. The Algarve region, specifically municipalities such as Lagos, was the stage of the “Age of Discovery” of the new world by sea, in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. In this context, the sea has been of crucial importance at cultural, economic, and communication levels. More recently, it has also become an important source of scientific endeavour (Guerreiro, 2007, Paula, 1992). Therefore, the sea can be a strategic resource to the destination, connecting the needs of both tourists and residents.

The study of destination image has been asserting itself as an instrument of differentiation, helping to increase the destinations competitiveness. Several authors state that destination image plays an important role in tourists’ behaviour, such as the recommendation of the destination to family and friends. Nevertheless, despite the growing importance of the theme, there is still a lack of scientific research regarding to cities image, compared with countries image, as well as a lack of comparative studies related to destination images formed by tourists and residents (Gallarza, Saura and García, 2002; Pike, 2002). Such studies are able to provide important management guidelines, since the focus on the consumer’s perspective will help destination managers to develop a more effective destination branding and a more original value creation process, contributing to the coastal destination differentiation.

In this context, the overall objective of this study is to analyse the image of Lagos in Algarve (Portugal), as a coastal destination, strongly culturally connected with the sea, from the tourists and residents’ point of view. In accordance with the stated objective, three research questions are proposed:

1. What are the main similarities and differences of the image of Lagos, as a tourist destination, through tourists’ and residents’ point of view?

2. Is the sea an important attribute of the destination for both tourists and residents?
3. Which attributes explain significantly the willingness of tourists to recommend Lagos as a tourist destination to family and friends?

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 The Importance of the Sea in Coastal Destinations Image

Coastal and marine tourism is one of the fastest growing areas within the world's largest industry (Hall, 2001; Honey and Krantz, 2007). Indeed, while tourism development has been spatially focused on the beach for much of the past 60 years, being an important attraction of many European destinations, the marine environment as a whole has become one of the new challenges in coastal destination strategies (European Commission, 2000). In this context, the concept of coastal tourism comprises the full range of tourism, leisure, and recreational activities that take place in the coastal zone and the offshore coastal waters. This concept can be also related to marine tourism that is directly related to ocean-based tourism such as deep-sea fishing and yacht cruising (Hall, 2001).

If tourists seek for new experiences related to the sea, at the same time, local people are increasingly concern to preserve their identity, environment, and natural, historical and cultural heritage from the impact of uncontrolled tourism. In this context, research has pinpointed the importance of the sea for coastal destinations image, in both perspectives of tourists and local community (European Commission, 2000). Indeed, tourism planning has been adapted and expanded to include broader environmental and socio-cultural concerns, focusing the potentialities of the sea to develop and promote sustainable economic development strategies at local, regional and national scales (Hall, 2001).

2.2 Tourists vs. Residents

Tourism involves a set of interactions between tourists and residents, which implies that strategies for developing the sector should take into account both stakeholders. In addition to tourists' perceptions, the study of the image that local communities have regarding to their place of residence as a tourism destination becomes necessary, as this public acts passively and actively in shaping the destination image from the perspective of tourists (Gallarza *et al.*, 2002). On one hand, locals may have images of their own place of residence, resulting in positive or negative word of mouth, which can be investigated in comparison with those of tourists (Simpson and Siguaw, 2008; Witter, 1985). On the other hand, residents are often seen as an attribute of the destination image and their support for tourism may affect the tourists' perceptions of the destination (Echtner and Ritchie, 1991; Gallarza *et al.*, 2002). Therefore, one of the greatest challenges of destination managers and marketers is to understand that they serve not only tourists and stakeholders directly related to the sector, but also to the local community (Howie, 2003; Ritchie, 1993).

2.3 Destination Image and Tourists' Behaviour

Destination image plays an important role in tourists' behaviour during the different moments which involve the tourist experience: a) in the decision process of choosing the destination (a priori image), b) in the process of comparison of expectations with experience, preceding the state of satisfaction and perceived quality (image in loco), and, finally, c) in the process of revisiting and recommending the destination to friends and family (a posteriori image) (Bosque, Martín, Collado and Salmones, 2009; Galí

and Donaire, 2005; Hunt, 1975; Selby and Morgan, 1996). Furthermore, since other factors influence the decision to revisit destinations, regardless of whether or not tourists choose to revisit, they can recommend the destination to their friends and relatives, as recommendation are the most credible informative agent in the process of choosing a holiday destination (Bigné, Sánchez and Sanz, 2009; Chen and Gursoy, 2001; Konecnik and Gartner, 2007; Stepchenkova and Mills, 2010). In this context, research should focus on the features of the destinations which significantly explain recommendation behaviour (Bigné *et al.*, 2009; Chen, 2003; Chen and Gursoy, 2001; Pike and Ryan, 2004; Vassiliadis, 2008).

Destination Image Dimensions

Several authors claim that destination image comprises three dimensions. The cognitive component relates to beliefs and knowledge that the individual has in terms of the attributes of the destination; the affective component refers to feelings that an individual associates to the destination (Baloglu and McCleary, 1999; Beerli and Martín, 2004; Bosque and Martín, 2008a); and the behavioral component is related to the actual conduct or intention to revisit and to recommend the destination to friends and family (Bosque and Martín, 2008b; Bosque *et al.*, 2009; Dann, 1996; Gartner, 1993; Pike and Ryan, 2004). These components contribute to the formation of the global destination image that several researchers consider to be bigger than the sum of its parts and it should be approached in a holistic perspective (Baloglu and McCleary, 1999; Beerli and Martín, 2004; Echtner and Ritchie, 1991; Fakeye and Crompton, 1991; Hunt, 1975; Phelps, 1986).

According to Echtner and Ritchie (1993), destination image can be measured through a functional-psychological *continuum*, encompassing individual and holistic impressions. The model proposed by these authors also allows the identification and differentiation of common functional and psychological attributes from distinctive or unique features. In this regard, despite the fact that several authors have suggested that Echtner and Ritchie's approach (1993) includes only the cognitive dimension and not the affective dimension of destination image (Bigné *et al.*, 2009), other researchers assume that the model encompasses both components (Stepchenkova and Morrison, 2008; Stepchenkova and Mills, 2010).

3. METHODOLOGY

In order to capture the complexity of the concept of destination image, the literature suggests a mixed methodology (unstructured and structured) able to retain as much information as possible, facilitating the analysis and comparison of results (Echtner and Ritchie, 1993; Jenkins, 1999).

3.1. Setting

Lagos is integrated in the region of the Algarve, which has an area of 4,996 km² and a coastline of around 220 Km (CCDR Algarve, 2008). The Algarve is characterized by a semi-mediterranean climate, marked by a soft winter and a long summer, low precipitation and an annual average temperature close to 18 °C. The region has about 430,000 inhabitants and receives around 2.9 million tourists, concentrated mostly in the summer (INE, 2009b). Being the Portuguese tourism destination with the highest number of overnights stays, the economy of the region is mainly dependent on tourism.

Lagos is one of the 16 municipalities in the Algarve region (Southern Portugal), and because of its coastal location, it offers mainly sun and beach tourism. In fact, the Bay of Lagos, which is over four kilometers long, is one of the largest bays in Europe. In order to cope with its dependence on sun and beach tourism and its related destination image, the strategic plan of the municipality of Lagos proposes the historical and cultural connection to the 'Age of Discovery' and the sea as a strategic opportunity to differentiate the destination. The municipality has 28 890 inhabitants (INE, 2009a) and receives around 143151 tourists a year (INE, 2009b).

3.2 Instruments and data

In the first phase of this study, in order to capture the main attributes adequate to measure the image of Lagos, in mid-July 2009, 50 tourists and 50 residents were surveyed in its downtown area. The three questions used in this survey were adapted from Echtner and Ritchie's study (1993), as follows: (1) What images or characteristics come to mind when you think of Lagos as a holiday destination?; (2) How would you describe the atmosphere or mood that you would expect to experience while visiting Lagos?; and (3) Please list any distinctive or unique tourist attractions that you can think of in Lagos. In the second phase, the results of the first phase were used to develop a questionnaire which was subjected to a pre-test. After this procedure, this questionnaire was distributed among 379 tourists and 378 residents, in August 2009, in the municipality of Lagos. The cluster sampling method was used. This is a random procedure in which all individuals within a particular area or location are considered as a cluster (Hill and Hill, 2008).

The questionnaire applied to tourists consisted of three groups of questions. Group 1 involved the 20 attributes yielded in the first stage of this study. In order to measure their level of agreement with these attributes, individuals were asked to respond to each item using a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree) (Baloglu and McCleary, 1999; Bigné et al., 2009). Group 2 embodied one question which was related to the behavioural component: "Would you recommend Lagos as a tourist destination to your family and friends?" The respondents were asked to respond using a five-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (definitively not) to 5 (definitively yes) (Baker and Crompton, 2000; Bigné *et al.*, 2009; Bosque and Martín, 2008b; Opperman, 2000; Pike and Ryan, 2004). Group 4 referred to sociodemographic information. The questionnaire for residents comprised two groups of questions using the same structure as the groups 1 and 4 of the tourists' questionnaires.

The tourists sample included 182 males (8.8% between 18 and 24 years old, 79.1% 25 and 64, and 12.1% 65 or older), and 197 females (10.7% between 18 and 24, 75.1% 25 and 64, and 14.2% 65 or older), making a total of 379 respondents. In terms of country of origin, 67.0% were foreign tourists and 33.0% were Portuguese tourists. In this sample, 51% of the participants had a university degree, 40% had completed secondary education, 7% had completed their primary education, and the other respondents had no level of education. The residents sample included 185 males (13.5% between 18 and 24, 66.0% 25 and 64, and 20.5% 65 or more) and 193 females (13.0% between 18 and 24, 62.2% 25 and 64, and 24.9% 65 years or more), together 378. Of these, 87.8% had Portuguese nationality and 12.2% foreign. More frequent levels of education were primary (38%), secondary (37%), and university (20%).

3.3. Data analysis methods

For data analysis, this research used univariate descriptive statistics, the Cronbach's alpha coefficient to verify the internal consistency of the items included in the questionnaire,

and the chi-square automatic interaction detector (CHAID) method. This multivariate technique was applied to understand the contribution of the cognitive component of the image of Lagos to tourists' recommendation of the destination to friends and family. This algorithm developed by Kass (1980) tends to find a classification of population groups which could describe the dependent variable as best as possible. CHAID is especially suitable for use with categorical variables, and produces segments that are mutually exclusive and exhaustive by performing chi-square tests with Bonferroni adjustment. This criterion-based technique possesses several advantages in comparison with non-criteria methods, such as cluster analysis, which consider all of the variables interdependently (Chen, 2003).

4. STUDY FINDINGS

4.1. Tourists vs. residents

Figure 1 corresponds to the results of the first and second questions of the survey used in the first phase of the study. Holistically, in the tourists' perspective, Lagos has great and beautiful beaches, white sand, bright sun, and good promenade in the historical and maritime scenarios. As for the residents, Lagos has good, long, and beautiful beaches, with calm sea, sun throughout the year, and a historical and cultural scenario. Additionally, tourists describe the destination as welcoming and hospitable while residents consider Lagos as a calm, relaxing and safe destination.

Figure 1: Holistic Image of Lagos - Tourists vs. Residents

Tourists		Residents	
Functional characteristics		Functional characteristics	
- Beaches (78%)	- Great and beautiful beaches, with white sand	- Beaches (84%)	- Good, long and beautiful beaches, with calm sea
- Climate (34%)	- Sunshine	- Sea (54%)	- Sunshine all year
- Historical center (32%)	- Good promenade in historical and maritime scenario	- Climate (40%)	- Historical and cultural scenario
- Cultural heritage (30%)		- Cultural heritage (36%)	
- Marina (26%)			
<hr/>		<hr/>	
Friendly and receptive residents (58%)	- Welcoming and hospitable destination	- Tranquility and safety (44%)	- Calm, relaxing and safe destination
- Tranquility and safety (42%)			
Psychological characteristics		Psychological characteristics	

Source: Own

Figure 2 shows the results of the third open-ended question. When asked to list any distinctive or unique tourist attractions in Lagos, tourists refer "historical center" (66%) followed by "beaches" (44%), and residents respond "beaches" (58%) followed by "bay" (30%).

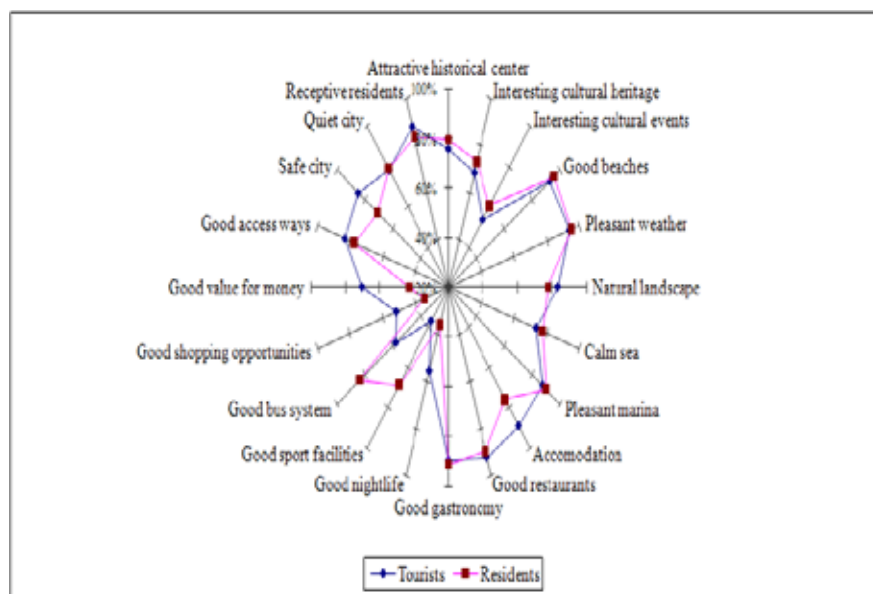
Figure 2: Unique characteristics of Lagos - Tourists vs. Residents

Tourists		Residents	
Unique characteristics	%	Unique characteristics	%
Historical center	66%	Beaches	58%
Beaches	44%	Bay	30%
Forte Ponta da Bandeira	28%	Slave Market	28%
Churches	26%	Ponta da Piedade	26%
Caves	24%	Discovery Avenue	22%
Gastronomy	20%	Walls	22%
Fish Market	20%	Historical Center	20%
		St. António Church	20%

Source: Own

In the second phase of the study (Figure 3), the internal consistency of the 20 attributes detected in the exploratory study and in the literature (Gallarza *et al.*, 2002) was estimated using the Cronbach's coefficient alpha, which is in both questionnaires superior to 0.7, indicating that the measure is reliable (tourists, 0.837; residents, 0.793). Both publics confer a higher level of agreement to the attributes "good beaches" (tourists, 92.8%; residents, 95.8%) and "pleasant weather" (tourists, 93.9%; residents, 95.2%). The attribute "interesting cultural events" is what gets the lowest percentage of agreement, consensually by tourists (53.6%) and residents (60.6%). The highest difference refers to the attribute "good sports facilities" where the level of agreement is 36.9% for tourists and 68.8% for residents. The two groups also differ in the level of agreement related to the attributes "good value for money" (tourists, 70%; residents, 43.1%), "good bus system" (tourists, 58%; residents, 83.6%), "good nightlife" (tourists, 55.5%; residents, 36%) and "good shopping opportunities" (tourists, 52%; residents, 34%). These differences are statistically significant (t tests for equality between two population proportions: p -value = 0.000).

Figure 3: Tourists' and Residents' level of agreement with the attributes of Lagos (agree + strongly agree)



Source: Own

Regarding to the second research question, the “sea” is spontaneously referred by both tourists and residents in the unstructured phase of the study as one of the features that they could think about Lagos as a tourist destination. Indeed, the beaches are referred as a unique characteristic of Lagos by both publics, while the residents also highlight the bay of the city. In the quantitative phase of the study, in addition to the “good beaches” already above analysed, both publics show that they highly associate Lagos to “pleasant marina” (tourists, 87.3%; residents, 89.7%) and “calm sea” (tourists, 73.3%; residents, 77.0%)

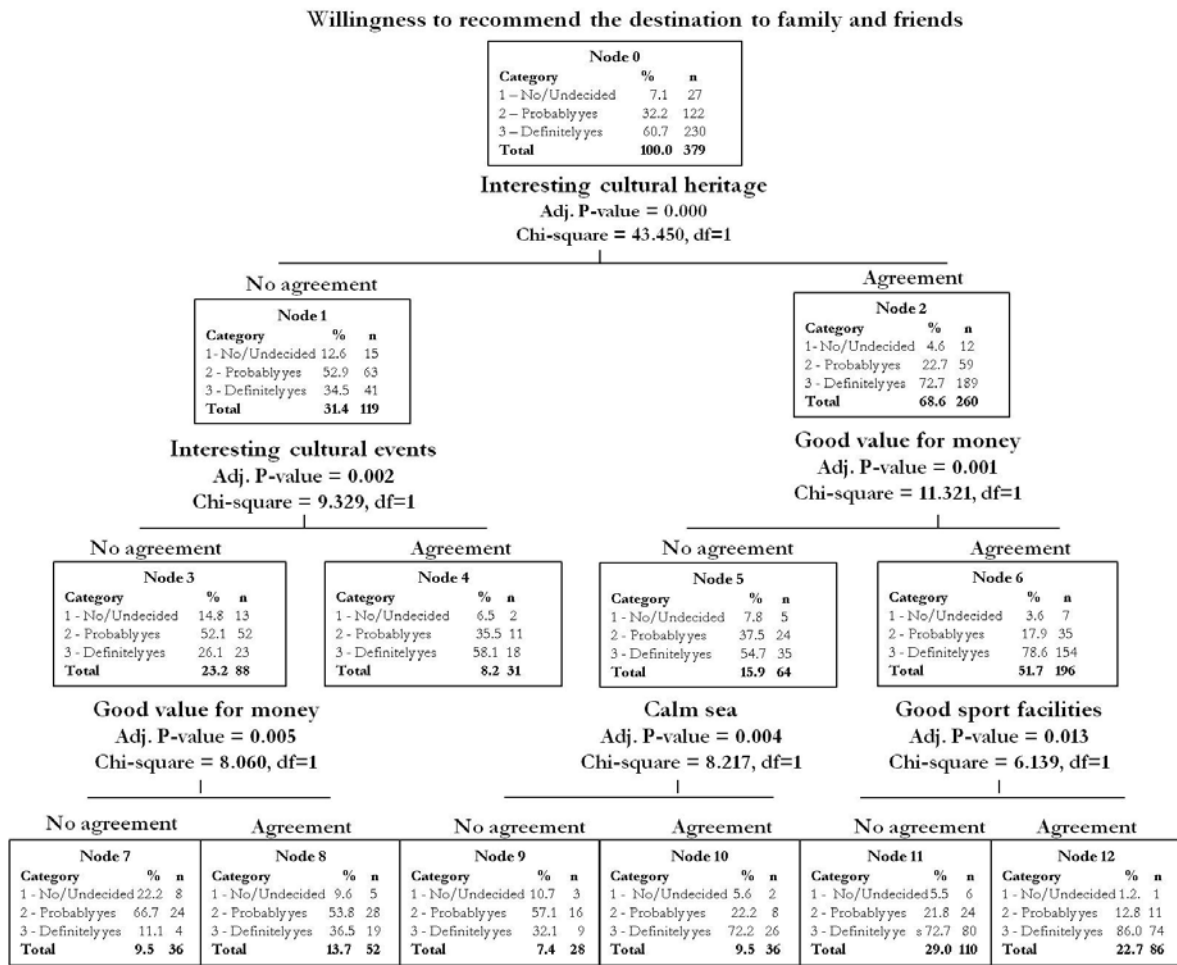
4.2. Destination image vs. tourist’s recommendation

In order to answer research question 3, it was used the CHAID methodology. The five original response categories were amalgamate into two categories (“no agreement” and “agreement”) for the dependent variable, and into three categories (“no/undecided”, “probably yes” and “definitely yes”) for the independent variables. This procedure was followed because some categories gather few answers. Criteria were also defined for tree growth: a minimum of 50 cases for parent nodes and 25 cases for child nodes.

It should be noted that of the 379 cases which were considered to be valid for CHAID analysis, 7.1% had no intention to recommend Lagos to their friends and family, or were undecided, while 32.2% said that they would “probably” recommend it and 60.7% were sure that they would do so (Figure 4). The tree presents seven terminal nodes (node 4 and nodes 7-12), suggesting seven segments of tourists. Five predictors out of the original set of 20 provided a significant explanation of the dependent variable, which led to the tree being divided into three levels: “interesting cultural heritage” (chi-square = 43.450; *p-value* = 0.000); “good value for money” (chi-square = 11.321; *p-value* = 0.001; chi-square = 8.060; *p-value* = 0.005), “interesting cultural events” (chi-square = 9.329; *p-value* = 0.002); “calm sea” (chi-square = 8.217; *p-value* = 0.004) and “good sports facilities” (chi-square = 6.139; *p-value* = 0.013), meaning that the variable “good value for money” was responsible for two partitions.

The final tree has an estimated risk of .298, with a standard error of 0.023, which means that the overall percentage of correct classification is 70.2%, being considered to be a good result (Escobar, 1998). As the number of cases was less than 1000, a cross-validation method was applied, which involved dividing the initial data into 10 different sub-samples, validating it, and estimating the errors of incorrect classifications (Pestana and Gageiro, 2009). In this study, the model presents a risk ratio for the overall sample (.298), which is close to the average of the estimated errors for each of the sub-samples (.325), not precluding the application of the model to other samples from the same population.

Figure 4: Tourists' willingness to recommend the destination to family and friends – CHAID Analysis



Source: Own

The authors conclude that the respondents who associate the significant attributes detected by the CHAID analysis to Lagos are more willing to recommend the destination to family and friends than those who don't agree. The main inference is based upon a comparison of node 7 and node 12. Node 7 includes tourists who have a less favourable image of the destination, with regard to the attributes "interesting cultural heritage", "interesting cultural events" and "good value for money". This segment includes a smaller percentage of tourists who were certain that they would recommend the destination in the future (11.1%). In turn, the opposite trend occurs in node 12. This group has a more favourable image of the destination, with regard to the attributes "interesting cultural heritage", "good value for money" and "good sports facilities", and it is also the group with the highest percentage of individuals who were sure that they would recommend the destination to others (86%).

Still regarding to research question 2, if the "sea" is whether or not an important attribute of the destination, it should be noted that "calm sea" is one of the five attributes which significantly explains tourist's recommendation. Moreover, of the tourists that think of Lagos as having a "calm sea", 72.2% are certain about their future recommendation, while of the tourists that have the opposite opinion, only 32.1% are sure about their future recommendation. These results follow the two opposite trends found in the CHAID analysis.

5. CONCLUSION

The central purpose of this study, covering tourists and residents of Lagos, was to measure the destination image, identifying the major aspects of agreement and disagreement in the perspectives of these two stakeholders. For this aim, the attributes to use in the analysis were identified, taking into account that they were appropriate to this coastal destination and the two stakeholders simultaneously, through an exploratory study with the application of open-ended questions. After a holistic approach, questionnaires were applied in order to measure the level of agreement of both publics regarding to the features of the destination.

Regarding to the image of Lagos perceived by tourists and residents, it is important to note that there are more similarities than differences. In fact, along with the beaches and the weather, the maritime and historical scenario was referred by both publics in the first phase of the study and confirmed in the second stage of the research.

In this context, it should be stressed the importance of using an unstructured phase before performing the questionnaires. Indeed, the attributes “calm sea” and “pleasant marina” were included in the questionnaires because they were spontaneously referred by residents and tourists, respectively, in the unstructured phase of the study, as one of the features that they could think about Lagos as a tourist destination. Therefore, including open-ended questions in destination image studies is important in order to find attributes that usually are not included in the pre-existing lists of destination attributes (Echtner and Ritchie, 1993; Jenkins, 1999).

Accordingly, the results showed the importance of including both tourists and residents in destination image studies. In fact, although the attribute “calm sea” was only referred by residents in the first phase of the study, the analysis of the questionnaires showed that tourists also strongly associate this feature to the destination. Likewise, “pleasant marina” is spontaneously referred only by tourists as an evident characteristic of the destination but also confirmed by residents in the second phase of the study.

Furthermore, the CHAID analysis revealed that the sea is an important attribute which significantly explains the tourists’ willingness to recommend the destination to family and friends. Based on this method, the features which explain the future recommendation of Lagos as a destination are, in descending order of the significance level: “interesting cultural heritage”, “good value for money”, “interesting cultural events”, “calm sea” and “good sports facilities”. This analysis allows concluding that although with a higher level of concordance by both tourists and residents, “good beaches” and “pleasant weather” do not significantly discriminate the tourist’s intention to recommend the destination.

These results point to the importance of exploring the diversification of coastal destinations supply, depending on the product “sun and sand”, aiming the destination sustainability (Aguiló, Alegre and Sard, 2007; Crouch and Ritchie, 1999). One alternative is focusing on culture (Chen and Gursoy, 2001; Valle, Guerreiro, Mendes and Silva, 2011; Vassiliadis, 2008). Indeed, the Algarve region, specifically Lagos, is historically connected with the sea. In this context, the advantages of the existing relation between the beaches, the sea and culture, and the evident connection between tourists and residents’ perceived destination images, can become a challenge to the destination management and marketing. This can be materialised in providing conditions to different publics in order to live diversified experiences focusing the maritime scenario. In this context, Ryan (1996) claims, for example, that beaches are plural in their imagery, suggesting different uses of this natural resource. Thus, it is important to take a careful look at the wide range of activities comprised in coastal and maritime tourism, which can be, for example,

associated to culture or to sports. In fact, culture and sports are destination features that significantly explain the tourists' willingness to recommend Lagos as a tourist destination.

However, if on one hand, tourists expect to find a range of activities and a variety of experiences (Hall, 2001; Poon, 1993), on the other hand, local people are increasingly anxious to preserve their own identity. In this context, destination management organizations should develop strategies in order to preserve the environment, natural, historical and cultural heritage of the destination from the impact of uncontrolled tourism and its attendant problems (European Commission, 2000). Thus, these concerns should be taken into account aiming to provide a sustainable development for coastal destinations and the feeling of a win-win situation for all stakeholders.

The present study confirms that the strategic guideline suggested by the "Strategic Plan of Lagos", based on the cultural importance of the "Age of Discovery" and the connection of Lagos to the sea, is in line with the image of Lagos perceived by both tourists and residents. This conclusion reinforces the importance of the sea in coastal tourism, in the perspectives of the two stakeholders under study. Furthermore, the research pinpoints the richness of the sea as a natural resource which can be used in innovative forms, regarding leisure and sports, benefiting both the tourists and the community.

Hence, the results stress the wide spectrum of possibilities for diversification and innovation of coastal tourism focused on the sea, pointing this economic activity as crucial for the Algarve. Indeed, coastal tourism is essential for the development and consolidation of a maritime cluster in the region, along with the other maritime sectors, and is therefore a critical issue regarding to the sustainable development of the region (University of Algarve, 2011).

5.1 Limitations and further research

The model of analysis followed in this study relied on the involvement of two stakeholders - tourists and residents – needed to develop a marketing and management strategy for coastal destinations. In relation to this concern, there are some limitations associated with this study that need to be addressed. Firstly, the analysis was limited only to the referred stakeholders and does not cover, therefore, other publics also involved in the study of destination image, such as investors, traders, hotels and restaurants businessmen and employees, local power and visitors in general. The application of the questionnaires during the month of August, considered high season of tourism in the Algarve, it is also a limitation of the study, showing mainly a seasonal perspective (Baloglu and McCleary, 1999). Thus, there is a strong representation of British tourists, reinforcing the need of replicating the study at different times of the year. Recognizing the need of a more comprehensive and participatory implementation with the cooperation of host community, public and private sector, it becomes important to extend the study to the destination image conveyed by the media. Therefore, the methodological value of the presented study is based mainly on its potential as a reference tool to improve the process of decision making regarding to the destinations' strategy.

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