

THE DELPHI TECHNIQUE APPLIED TO URBAN AND CULTURAL TOURISM RESEARCH IN THE ALGARVE

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RESUMO

O turismo urbano é hoje uma actividade económica e social de relevo, e a componente cultural das cidades é um dos factores principais para a atracção de visitantes.

O presente trabalho resulta da investigação desenvolvida no âmbito da dissertação de mestrado que estabeleceu como objectivos principais avaliar a importância do turismo cultural nas cidades de Faro e Silves, numa abordagem pela oferta, e propor formas de prever o desenvolvimento das actividades associadas a esse tipo de turismo para o futuro.

A "tranversalidade" do conhecimento ligado ao turismo e as dinâmicas que pode criar tornam o turismo, uma das actividades mais difíceis de quantificar e avaliar.

A investigação desenvolvida pode ser traduzida numa abordagem integradora do conceito de património cultural e de turismo urbano, domínios que até recentemente têm permanecido separados.

A utilização de vários métodos de investigação de forma complementar – entrevistas de grupo, método "Delphi" e estudo de caso – revelou-se um ponto forte da metodologia adoptada. Por outro lado, como será demonstrado, a técnica "delphi", ainda que tenha revelado algumas dificuldades na sua aplicação, e não se constituindo como um instrumento de decisão principal, nem tendo sido com frequência utilizado no turismo, demonstrou-se muito adequado para o tratamento de informação qualitativa.

Assim, apresentam-se as principais técnicas de investigação utilizadas na nossa pesquisa e analisam-se os vários métodos disponíveis à investigação em turismo. Alguns dos resultados adquiridos serão também sumariados nos estudos de caso, demonstrando o potencial que a utilização conjunta de vários métodos de pesquisa trouxe para a resposta aos objectivos propostos.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE

Turismo urbano e cultural; planeamento estratégico; investigação aplicada ao turismo; triangulação de métodos; análise qualitativa; visão prospectiva.

ABSTRACT

Urban tourism is a major economic and social activity and the cultural dimension of cities is one of the main factors that attract visitors.

The present work results from a dissertation thesis that aimed to evaluate the existence of cultural tourism in the towns of Faro and Silves and proposed means of fostering such activities in the future.

The "transversality" of knowledge linked to tourism and the dynamics it can create make tourism one of the most difficult activities to quantify and evaluate.

The developed research can be translated into an integrating approach of the concept of cultural patrimony and urban tourism, domains that so far have stayed apart.

The use of several research methods in a complementary way – group interviews, "Delphi" method and "case study" (three sided methods) -, has revealed to be a strong point of the followed methodology. On the other hand, as it will be shown later, the "Delphi" technique, although revealing some difficulties of application, and not being a decision instrument nor being often used in tourism, has been very useful for the treatment of qualitative information.

So we will introduce the main methodologies used on our research and analyse the various methods available for tourism research. Some of the acquired results are also summarized and specified in the case studies, standing out the potential that the combination of several research methods has brought to finding out the answer to the proposed aims.

KEYWORDS

urban and cultural tourism; strategic planning; research applied to tourism; triangulation of methods; qualitative analysis; prospective vision; "Delphi" technique.



INTRODUCTION

Urban tourism is a major economic and social activity and the cultural dimension of cities is one of the main factors that attract visitors. Nonetheless, urban tourism is rarely included within the scope of local planning activities. The present work results from a dissertation thesis that aimed to evaluate the existence of cultural tourism in the towns of Faro and Silves, and proposed means of fostering such activities in the future.

It also aimed to address the role of cities in diversifying and complementing the principal tourism product in the Algarve – Sun and Beach.

Through an offering approach, opportunities, threats and strategies for the development of the cultural patrimony as a tourist product complementary to "Sun and Beach" in the Algarve are discussed, in a prospective view heading to 2015 as the final year.

The transversality of knowledge linked to tourism and the dynamics it can create, make tourism one of the most difficult activities to quantify and evaluate. The positioning of this area of knowledge as an economic, social and human science has been largely debated, and it has even generated real fights among different scientific areas.

The developed research can be translated in an integrating approach of the concept of cultural patrimony and urban tourism, domains that so far have stayed apart.

Our problem is, thus, framed in an research area that shows some lack of theoretical sustainability and previous research.

The use of several research methods in a complementary way - group interviews, "Delphi" method and "case study" (three sided methods) -, has revealed to be a strong point of the followed methodology. On the other hand, as it will be shown later, the "Delphi" technique, although revealing some difficulties of application, and not being a decision instrument nor being often used in tourism, has shown very useful for the treatment of qualitative information.

So we will introduce the main methodologies used on our research and analyse the various methods available for tourism research. Some of the acquired results are also summarized and specified in the case studies, standing out the potential that the combination of several research methods has brought to finding out the answer to the proposed aims.

DEVELOPMENT

If we analyse the offer of products of cultural tourism we see that the number of these available products has been growing very fast in the last years (Richards, 1994; Swarbrooke, 1994), fundamentally due to the opening of many attractions in the last decades (where the thematic parks are included) and to the fact of the "tourist industry" having constituted more programs with cultural products.

Regarding this fact we have to add that for high number of attractions, the cultural inheritance is its "blush product", once there are many destinies that were developed on the basis of their historical and cultural appeal.

The cultural-tourist products emerged as privileged partners in the relation between destiny and its need of diversification, because it meets the need of diversifying offer, but also meets the needs of cultural identity of communities, nowadays facing the growing movement of globalization and the transformation of productive processes (Gonçalves, 2003).

The tourism applied research has been devoted to the possible development of new offers trying to respond to the changes and the characteristics of the post-modern society, but also to innovate the image of the traditional destinies.

The cultural heritage is one of the components of greater attraction of cities and a basic element of the structure of the modern city. For its time, cultural tourism, while instrument of local development appears associated to advantages that go from the reputation of market in growth, the positive paper in the construction of the image of the destiny, and the promotion of the nature of a specific-place (consolidation of the culture and identity of the place).

The tourist destinies use the images of the inheritance more and more as a form of affirmation of their identity, at the same time that one assists to an increase of the search of this type of product.

Underlying to this work is an attempt to evaluate the development of cultural tourism product in the cities of Faro and Silves, and its forms of future development, putting the role of the cities in perspective in the development of strategies of diversification and complementarity, regarding the main product of tourism in the Algarve - Sun and Beach.

In our technologically advanced and consumerist society one of the principal threats that fall back



on the inheritance is the loss of sense of its use. Nevertheless, this happens when for several circumstances we turn the inheritance into just one more object of consume.

The recognition of the importance of the cultural sustainability was already apprehended by the cultural tourism, when it is considered that the future of the tourist industry depends on the protection of the environmental, patrimonial and cultural resources of each region.

However, the discussion of the cultural inheritance associated to tourism surfaces a field little explored in what concerns the applied studies and product development (Ritchie, 1993; Creswell, 1994; Krueger, 1994; Dencker, 1998):

- Emerging difficulties as a result of the "interdisciplinarity";
- Absence of definite and right knowledge of the phenomenon in study;
- Lack of articulation and knowledge between "tourist industry" and the sector of culture and inheritance;
- Research devoted to tourism has not been favouring the compared studies.

Presently we are watching a growing interest in the articulation between these two powers, but a clear difficulty happens when trying to put into practice what was already declared in the political and institutional speech.

This and other questions were an object of analysis in our theory of Master's degree, and they substantiate the results that will show up in the course of this work.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The new challenges of tourism and the emergence of cultural tourism

Nowadays society faces new challenges, being pointed out as the most relevant (Hernández and Tresseras, 2001): the globalization of the political, economical and cultural relations; the acceleration of the processes of regionalization and administrative decentralization that favour the reunion or the rediscovery of the territory; the ascent of the social democracy that demands deeper public intervention in culture; the extension of education and putting in march processes of pedagogic renovation; and the extension of the culture of leisure and free time that accelerated the growth of "mass" tourism and favoured the cultural consume.

These social changes were also responsible for the deep change in the parameters of traditional tourism and the consolidation of a new model (Mundet et al., 1997:79), what was designated by 'post-fordism'. The most relevant characteristics of the 'post-fordist' tourism were already recognized in some studies (Fortuna, 1995; Mundet *et al.*, 1997; Poon, 1993; Urry, 1990): the disappearance of the frontiers regarding other activities (culture, sport, show, work); the surpass of the geographical concentration; the changes of the forms of business organization; the crisis of the "Massification" and the disappearing of the concept of authenticity.

In this context, the cultural tourism was constituted like an attractive area of development (Bianchini and Parkinson, 1993; Richards, 1993), since it represents a form of attraction of internal and external investment, and it stimulates the investment in image improvement of the city or region, besides "injecting" revenues through the tourist expense to which it gives rise (Myerscough, 1988).

Cultural tourism is still seen like an important form of rewarding the cost of building new infrastructures and cultural equipments (the reductions in the public expenses in the years 80 made it still more attractive) (Walle, 1998).

ii) The relation between tourism and management of the cultural inheritance

The relation between tourism and management of cultural inheritance has been typified like a competition by the use of the same resource instead of being characterized as a cooperation to reach objectives of mutual benefits, and an excessive attention has been given to the maintenance of the values of conservation on tourism behalf.

Goeldner and Ritchie (1995), for example, argue that a process of "homogeneity" of tourist products is taking place at a world-wide level, because a great similarity is happening between what each destiny offers to a tourist. That is why they point out the need to encourage cultural diversity (p.263). On the other hand, McKercher and du Cros (2002) talk about the importance of planning tourism based on cultural inheritance, and of cultural management, proposing the identification of those resources that are really exceptional and of great value to the destiny.

Like all the cultural contemporary phenomena, tourism is also a complex one (Cohen, 1988;



Town Cultural
Heritage and
Patrimony

Cultural Tourism

Figure 1 – Conceptual framework

Source: author

Krippendorf, 1987; Mathieson and Wall, 1982). Cooperation between the various actors seems to be the key to success for a sustainable development (v. Fig.1).

In what concerns the economical positive potential of tourism for the city, the next main factors stand out (Ashworth and Tunbridge, 1990:260): cultural tourism capitalizes the already existent resources in the historical city; the use of infrastructures for tourism and services of the city will bring only marginal costs to the existent equipments; if compared with the necessary effort in other sectors and in areas where there are few alternatives, it applies for a low investment for the creation of jobs. The economical benefits generated by tourism activities represents more financial resources for the conservation of the built environment (ibid .:262), but a formula that optimizes the relation losses/benefits will have to be found for each place and will certainly have its basis on a larger cooperation between the different agents, and in the participation of the local community.

Davidson (1992) has no doubts about the growing trends of the demand on cultural heritage resources as touristic products: «'Cultural tourism' (...) is the motivation behind the vast majority of visits to Europe from the less ancient continents of the 'New World', and also plays a major part in the growing trend towards the taking of short breaks and second holidays.» (p.3).

In terms of demand, tourism is based on a process of consumption of experiences, sale of dreams able to satisfy the necessities of the consumer – the tourist. The so called "new tourism" values the experience more, in an attempt of giving a meaning to an ephemeral one (Hernández and Tresseras, 2001).

Based on the aims settled for this work, we identified the next theoretical presuppositions as essential for the development of tourist products associated to culture and inheritance in the Algarve:

- the emergence of a new model of tourism and the decadence of the traditional model (Cuvelier *et al.*, 1994; Poon, 1993; Prentice, 1993rd and 1994);
- the 'new tourist' and the evolution tendencies of the cultural tourism (Barré, 1995; Cuvelier et al., 1994; Davidson, 1992; Hewison, 1987; Prentice, 1993rd and 1994; Richards, 1996; among others);
- the cultural component in the urban tourism as strategy of local development (urban regeneration and relaunch of the tourist destiny) (Ashworth and Tunbridge, 1990; Caffyn and Lutz, 1999; Fainstein and Judd, 1999; Källtorp et al., 1997; among others);
- and, the practices of management and planning of the cultural inheritance as a tourist resource (Ashworth and Dietvorst, 1995; Boniface, 1995; Boullon, 1996; European Commission, 1999; Coast, 2001; Dredge, 1998; Gunn, 1994; OWHC, 2000; Patin, 1998 and 1999; Pearce, 1989; Prentice, 1993b; Van will give Borg, 1998).

We can characterize the relation between culture, tourism and local administration as summarised above:

| Agents | Present Situation |
|---|--|
| Tourist industry | Attentive to the variations of the search and creators of new products. |
| Cultural agents/heritage managers | Perceive tourism as an additional fountain of revenues/income in periods of retraction of the public support. |
| Local authorities | Try to support the physical and functional renovation of specific areas based on new sectors of the local economy, among which leisure activities and tourism. |

Source: author



Tourism sees resources in the perspective of the user and values them for their intrinsic and extrinsic appeal to consumption. Tourism has, in general, the tendency to maximize the number of visits to the resource whereas the museums, for example, are more preoccupied on the well-being of the resource and even limit access to it.

It was already discussed widely that tourism and associate activities are responsible for quick and significant alterations in economical, social and cultural terms, as well as, for times, once in a while the origin of radical transformations in the natural and built environment.

The process of "transformation" of cultural and patrimonial resources in tourism must be based on a planning of the tourist development that secures the practice of a sustainable tourism, meaning (AHC, 2004 and Cabrini, 2002): to favour the balanced development of the territory; to improve the conditions of life of the local communities; to favor the permanence of the population in the rural zones; to potentiate the reincrease in value of the traditional products; to promote the cultural local initiatives; and to establish a flow of relations among the countryside, the people and the city. It will be basic and a priority the creation of social and economic benefits for the local community with the money coming from tourism.

RESEARCH AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

Taking into account those concerns and the already developed research as working base, we established as main objectives for the answer to the proposed subject:

- To consider the difficulties of an research devoted to tourism;
- To present and to discuss concrete proposals the triangulation of methods;
- To identify the main challenges that emerged from the research of the urban and cultural tourism domains.

RESEARCH PROBLEM:

Can or can not the cultural component of the Urban Tourism be constituted in the Algarve as a complement of the offer to the main product 'sun and beach', in the cases of Faro and Silves?

In function of the formulated questions and the characteristics of the research, it was determined what the inquiry to be developed would be of the exploratory type, in order to make possible a deeper intimacy with the phenomenon.

METHODOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK

The presented research took as a base a triangulation of methods (v. Table n.1), i.e. a combination of several methods of research (interview of group; "Delphi" method and case study). It was also determined as more appropriated the qualitative methods because they allow a more deepened and complementary study of the social phenomena (from a revision of literature on techniques and methods of research in social sciences, among which: Easton, 1982; Veal, 1997; Dencker, 1998).

The qualitative approaches are necessary to try to realize the nature and the effects of meanings and the understanding of recent phenomena. At the time, being the qualitative data much more appreciated by decision makers because the results are presented in an objective and understandable way (Krueger, 1994:29; in Gonçalves, 2003).

Table 1 – Importance of the research methods to the final results

| | Summary |
|---|---|
| Case Study (Easton, 1982; Creswell, 1994; Dencker, 1998) | To realize the present situation and to do the diagnosis of the problem of research. To study and gather detailed information of connected cases with the phenomenon to be studied. Allow combination with other research techniques. |
| Group Interview (Krueger, 1994; Peterson, 1994; Arksey e Knight, 1999) | To promote the joint confrontation between the cultural and patrimonial sector, and the 'tourist industry'. To deepen cultural inheritance and the relative data to the current situation of the product in the Algarve. To consolidate the problems questioned by the "Delphi" method. |
| Delphi (Leng et al., 1989; Green et al., 1990; Creswell, 1994; Petersson, 1994; Dencker, 1998) | To make known the market of cultural tourism in the Algarve and its potential of development. To create interest in realizing attitudes and behaviours face to the future evolution of the "cultural inheritance". To allow the recognition of convergences and divergences face to strategic intersectorial measures. To make possible the development of future sceneries and the gathering of information that contributes to the introduction of strategic improvements by using a fundamentally prospective method. |

Source: author



The empirical analysis fell back on the case study of Faro and Silves (face to the proximity of the object of study; to the already existent research; and to the recognized affirmation of the Algarve in the tourist international market while "sun and sea" destination).

It was established as fundamental the development of a diagnosis of the current situation, as well as, the knowledge of the level of development of the cultural inheritance as tourist resources, and of the way the agents responsible for the offer expect them to be in the future (at both cities).

The selection of specialists who participated in the "delphi" method (Figure n.1) was based on several

criteria (Leng et al., 1989; Mitchell and McGoldrick, 1994), having the most relevant names resulted from the field work. So it was determined as more important: the professional experience of the members of the panel regarding the object of study; and it was asked the members initially proposed for the panel (in exploratory not structured interviews), to suggest names of other persons whose participation they considered important for the panel. It seemed determinant for their choice the theoretical preparation connected with the object of study and the experience acquired in the area (Dencker, 1998).

Figure 2 – Participants selection



Regarding the "delphi" method, and because it was the main resource of the gathering of primary information, its period of application was between 22 of February and 30 of June of 2001, being the research distributed in three different inquiries to the same agents at different moments.

That technique fulfilled an important role in the identification of future developments for the "new" tourist products (Leng et al., 1989; Green, 1990), it as allowed to anticipate future events and it could serve as the main basis to formulate and to direct the current strategies of management, and to determine the tactics that could affect the future. Main difficulties arose from the maintenance of specialists' answers and to their motivation to participate in the solicited terms (Gonçalves, 2003).

SUMMARY OF THE RESEARCH RESULTS AND PROPOSALS FOR THE FUTURE - SILVES AND FARO

The offer of complementary and/or alternative products (in particular of the cultural inheritance) is perceived as necessary and strategic for part of the agents of tourism, of culture and of heritage of the Algarve region (Gonçalves, 2003). The

results of the research demonstrate it. However, as said before, to pass from speech to practice, is not always very easy.

In an attempt to systematize the obtained results we can say:

- There are positive expectations in what concerns the marketing of the product cultural heritage.
- Some initiatives of rehabilitation of the cultural inheritance, having insight the revitalization of the cultural local identity are planned in both cities.
- There is a reduced involvement of the local community in cultural projects.
- There is no articulation among tourism, culture and heritage sectors.
- ❖ A lack of cultural itineraries happens.
- It is drawn the same tourist profile for the common tourist in the Algarve and the one visiting the cultural and patrimonial resources.
- There were not identified great negative impacts resulting from the use of the cultural inheritance as tourist resource.
- The appropriate management of the resources is recognized as preventive of its incident.
- The necessity of co-ordination among the



entities with responsibilities in these areas is noted and it is recognized the need of a larger mobilization of the business initiative.

In terms of proposals and recommendations for the marketing and promotion of the cultural inheritance while tourist product and as main complement to the 'sun and beach' in the Algarve, the following were pointed out:

- Adoption of a politics of "new positioning" of the tourist product, through the establishment of strategies that lead to a larger differentiation and competitiveness.
- Constitution of an office/point of contact among cultural agents, associations and holders of information about European financing programs.
- Promotion of the development of market researches and distribution of results by the different agents.
- A greater professionalism and management notions should be provided to the business of the cultural and patrimonial sector (training actions).
- Development of cultural planning aimed at the tourist.
- Promotion of involvement of the community.
- Constitution of a "net" for the marketing of the cultural inheritance (e.g. partnership that develops the joint forms of promotion of the cultural attractions).
- Determination of forms of control and evaluation of the initiatives carried out (to let know the impacts of the real actions and make easy proposals of new measures).
- Bet on spreading the 'word-of-mouth', once the taking of decision of tourists is often influenced by relatives and friends.
- Support greater investments in regional and national promotion for the foreign market.
- Creation of a forum/committee of discussion and advising in these areas.

These concrete actions proposed in 2001 have not found great development even to the present date.

CONCLUSION

A bigger competition between cities and regions to attract incoming tourist revenues and investment led to a particular emphasis in the differentiation of the product, where culture and inheritance appear as determinant elements. Most of the offer was constituted around the traditional forms of cultural inheritance – museums and art galleries – and it is

necessary to recognize that culture includes a great variety of activities.

Equally, we can not forget that the cultural inheritance can constitute an essential component of diversification of the tourist offer and target the destiny relaunch (in case of the Algarve, for the qualification and complementarity of the principal product), on the other side, tourism can contribute in a very positive way to the requalification and revitalization of the urban centres (attraction of new investments, improvement of the quality of life of the local populations, urban renovation).

There are mutual interests between tourism and cultural heritage in the management, conservation and presentation of the cultural and patrimonial products, nevertheless, both sectors still operate in parallel plans, maintaining a partnership with little dialogue (Benediktsson, 2004).

An analysis of the resultant implications of the advanced scenerios, makes possible the introduction of improvements, so that the Algarve renews its competitiveness and in case of the cities in study, so that they affirm themselves as a tourist complementary offer.

Besides the already above-mentioned factors, we are certain that the development of the cultural inheritance as tourist product will be able to have a very positive contribute in what concerns a better spacial distribution of the tourist offer of the Algarve (characterized by a great concentration especially in the coast), but also in a better seasonal distribution of the demand (a major contribute for a greater atractiveness of the region in periods of less tourist demand).

The developed study does not make possible the generalization of results, but some questions can be common to other places in a similar phase of development. We checked, however, that there is a very reduced knowledge of our cities and of statistical information referring to tourism.

We hope this research has given a main contribution to the coming together of culture, cultural heritage and tourism agents, and also to demonstrate the need of strategic work between the public and private sectors, for a better use of the cultural heritage while tourist resource.

Some opportunities of research remain for the future in different domains: on the image and perception of the tourist product, to determine strategies for the "repositioning" of the tourist product



of the Algarve; regarding a deeper knowledge of the motivations and consumption of cultural-tourist products (expectations versus experience); analysis and comparison of demographic-partner profiles of the tourists, what they visit and what they consume of the cultural heritage offered by the Algarve; and, the study and analysis of the marketing techniques and visitors management, in a way that it is able to develop the attractiveness of the cultural heritage as a tourist product in the Algarve.

According to the words of one of the participants in the research: "The tourist of the future in the Algarve will be the one we want. It all depends on the offer that will be created». However it is not enough to have product – it is necessary to be able "to wrap it up", promote it and market it.

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