The wine tourism in the Douro demarcated region: The harvest festival as a tourist product

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Goal and objectives of the dissertation

Goal

This thesis aims to analyse the contribution of Wine Tourism in Douro Demarcated Region (DDR) through a case study focused on the main tourist event in the region: the Harvest Festival and its organization, key players, associated territories as well as the valuation in tourist destination promotion.

Objectives:

- a) To associate wine tourism to the cultural landscape of the region;
- b) To identify key players and the respective territorialities in Douro Demarcated Region's tourist activity;
- c) To analyze the role of Wine Tourism in the (re)building of this region's image;
- d) To know the contribution of Wine Tourism in the promotion of DDR as tourist destination and its association to the diverse local development trajectories;

e) Via the case study, to investigate the type of social interaction the tourists experience in the Harvest Festival;

f) To set the participants' profile, motivations, degree of satisfaction and territorialities in the Harvest Festival.

Methodology

The methodology used is based on the review and discussion of the literature and analysis of the state of the art. Considering the purpose of the research and after analysing the different techniques for the collection of information we adopted a mixed methodology, with qualitative and quantitative analyses. The collection of data was based on questionnaires, one of the most used tools in tourism (Brunt, 1997). They were applied in five languages during the Harvest Festival in 2012 (September and October) in the territories of largest tourism flow: Vila Real, Peso da Régua and Lamego.

The focus was on the stakeholders that, in general, had wine tourism programs. In the study of the Harvest Festival 2012, the direct and/or participant observation was considered to be an appropriate way to analyse the relationship between tourists and hosts. In this type of events, this is a technique that complements and helps to validate the results. During the event, the participant observation was undertaken by the researcher who spent long periods of time in the Douro Region, before and during the event, to interact with the participants, to experience the grape harvest and to have a more real perception of this tourist destination.

In the analysis of the results of the 410 valid questionnaires is possible to set the Douro wine tourist's profile and the role and importance of wine tourism promoting this destination. To analyze the experience dimension of the tourists surveyed, we selected the Pine and Gilmore model (1999) "The Four Realms of an Experience", which identifies four useful dimensions: in the development of the experience (active vs. passive) as well as experiencing the event (absorption vs. immersion).

Results

The results show that the profile is very similar to other international wine regions: most of them are national tourists, married, in the 30-39 age range, with high qualifications and employed. Nevertheless, 32.7% are foreign tourists, which is a high percentage if compared to benchmarking wine destinations carried out during this study.

In the Harvest Festival, not all activities can be experienced by all tourists in a participatory manner unlike in the case of wine tastings (depending on previous knowledge) or purchasing of wines. Actually, the grape picking and foot treading are activities in which the tourist influences and plays an important role in the experience, however, these activities are not available to all tourists. There are also activities that promote interaction between tourists and hosts (i.e. the folkloric ranch or the vineyard)

which is the case of activities that imply tourist participation in traditional dances and songs.

In general, the data collected from the visitors shows a very positive perception of the destination and of the experience obtained during the Harvest Festival. Most of the national tourists, who mainly came from urban areas, considered the experience very interesting and to be repeated. Most respondents (86%) recommend the Harvest Festival, the Douro destination (96.8%) and intend to return to the region (86%).

Theoretical conclusions

The empirical study contributed to the evolution of knowledge on Wine Tourism in Douro Demarcated Region and to the updating of data on the Wine Routes in Portugal.

The first theoretical contribution results from the Douro Harvest Festival tourist's profile, motivations and degree of satisfaction. We also identified and defined different types of wine tourists in the region.

Based on the interaction with the hosts, we analysed the dimension of the experience of the tourists interviewed, using the Pine and Gilmore model.

Another contribution is related to having identified the need of a structured offer, involving all stakeholders, increasing the length of stay in the region. Based on the research carried out, an updated SWOT analysis was developed which identifies the main tourist resources that constitute the strong image and tourism potential of the region. It also examines the weaknesses and threats which must be considered and minimized.

The final data extracted from the results of the investigation allowed to identify the Wine tourism value chain in the destination Douro, and how wine tourism experiences contribute to the promotion of this tourist destination.

This research allowed to validate all hypotheses generated and, despite having as

main objective the analysis of tourist demand in Douro's regions, it also points out ways and suggestions for the valorization of the destination.

Practical application of the dissertation

The tourism industry is increasing and it is beginning to be an extremely important part of Douro Valley which has grown consistently as a destination, first for wine makers and now through tourism.

This research shows that Wine Tourism and the level of satisfaction of its tourists contributes to the promotion of the tourist destination. The wine tourists who visits the DDR are motivated by its landscape and by their own interest in knowing more on the culture of grapevine and wine of the region.

Although a significant majority of the respondents recommends the Harvest Festival and intends to return to Douro, the actual tendencies point out an increase in the demand for customized products with a high degree of flexibility. In this type of event, which usually lasts about four weeks, the activities and cultural attractions offered to tourists must promote the curiosity or motivation to participate in a more active way, as is the case of grape picking, foot treading, dancing, or even wine tastings. At this point we show through a new value chain model in Wine tourism the importance and advantages of involving all stakeholders.

This thesis points out the constraints and advantages faced by a UNESCO destination. The responsibility of being a World Heritage destination poses difficult challenges regarding the type of activities that should be permitted to accommodate tourism growth, but experience has shown that a positive atmosphere for introducing management actions can be achieved by involving stakeholders and partners in the process of planning animation activities as well as in the implementation of the whole process. For all this to happen, all the potential (strengths and opportunities) of the territory must be developed, promoting the different dimensions of the tourist experience, where

the endogenous resources and the players involved in the planning process have been incorporated.

Currently, the challenge will be to find ways to articulate the different interests of the segments (business, local, regional and national public authorities) and the communities' involvement, which is key in the production and availability of the tourist product, as well as their compatibility with other productive activities of the Wine Tourism destination.

The research showed a lack of institutional coordination, therefore we propose the reactivation of the Port Wine Route or the creation of an organism that will structure, organize and sell the destination offer of the Douro region.

Content of the dissertation

Abstract of Chapter 1: Tourism: a growing sector

This chapter contextualises and analyses the impact and growth of tourism at international and national levels. Through updated statistics, an approach is developed on the importance of tourism for the development of most world regions, including Portugal.

Abstract of Chapter 2: The tourism development of low density cultural landscapes

This chapter discusses the characterization and growth of tourism in low density areas, as well as illustrates its constraints and competitive advantages. Subsequently, there are sociocultural changes in consumers' behavior and in the motivations of the new tourist, which are very relevant for the case study. Finally, we analyse the new types of tourism and the need to develop creative and innovative products as a way to promote the sustainability of the territories.

Abstract of Chapter 3: Tourism and sustainable development in low density areas

In a synthesized way, we approach in this point several authors' views on the new functionalities of rural areas, their positive and negative aspects and the risks of deterritorialization. The aim is to emphasize

the need to use resource conservation tools, such as spatial planning and other crucial tools for territorial management. At the sectoral level, the importance of the National Strategic Plan for Tourism is explained.

Abstract of Chapter 4: Tourism and the wine landscapes

In this chapter a review of the literature on the wine tourism topic is presented. We approach the concept of a demarcated region which is decisive for wine-growing regions and the ways in which Wine Tourism can be used. Then *benchmarking* is carried out in the main Wine Tourism destinations such as France, Spain, Italy and the United States of America. The chapter continues with a framework of Wine Tourism in Portugal, which includes the creation and organization of Wine Routes. Finally, we focus on issues related to the management of a Wine Tourism destination, such as brand management, events and the importance of network cooperation.

Abstract of Chapter 5: The Douro Demarcated Region

This is the chapter dedicated to the study of the territory in which the case study has been developed. A characterization of the region is carried out in terms of contextualization, history, grapevine and wine culture, and the importance of its classification as World Heritage. It follows the approach and systematization of the strategic planning instruments in DDR with all the support mechanisms.

Abstract of Chapter 6: The Douro Tourism

In this point a characterization of the DDR tourist supply was carried out, which includes its tourist products and lodging offer. A detailed study of tourist demand and its evolution is carried out with the analysis of the Tourist Saturation Index.

Abstract of Chapter 7: The profile of wine tourists

This chapter reflects on the different characteristics of wine tourists' profiles in the main wine-growing destinations. It includes the distinctive factors, particularly cultural

ones, and the very different motivations that influence their profile. An analysis of the "New World" (Napa Valley, Australia) and the "Old World" (France, Spain, Italy, Portugal) is developed.

Abstract of Chapter 8: The research problem and methodology

In this chapter we work on the research problem, its objectives and identification of the variables, then we formulate and discuss the hypotheses. We also explain the methodologies used to collect and analyse data.

Abstract of Chapter 9: Presentation, analysis and discussion of results

This chapter presents in detail the results obtained in the questionnaires applied during the Harvest Festival (2012). A descriptive analysis of the sample was developed which includes the sociodemographic profile of tourists, their motivations, degree of satisfaction, level of loyalty and their relationship with hosts.

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