

THE IMAGE AND SUSTAINABILITY OF TOURISM DESTINATIONS

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STRATEGIC VALUATION OF LANDSCAPE ELEMENTS IN NORTHERN PORTUGAL AS A TOURISM DESTINATION

Fernanda A. Ferreira^a, Dália Liberato^b and Ana Filipa Azevedo^c

^a Applied Management Research Unit (UNIAG), School of Hospitality and Tourism of Polytechnic Institute of Porto (ESHT)

faf@esht.ipp.pt

^{b, c} School of Hospitality and Tourism of Polytechnic Institute of Porto (ESHT)

dalialib@esht.ipp.pt,

afilpalazevedo@gmail

This article aims to emphasize the importance and function of the landscape as a tourism resource, increasingly valued in tourism destinations, and its impact on the motivation and preferences of the tourists in the northern region of Portugal as a tourism destination. The main aim of this study is to understand tourist preferences and their motivation regarding landscape as a tourism resource. This study also offers an itinerary of terraced viewpoints in the northern region of Portugal.

Methodology used in this study is quantitative and based on surveys supported with questionnaires. The sample size is 302 participants who have visited the Northern region of Portugal between March and July 2019. The aim of this questionnaire is to understand in what aspects the tourist preferences regarding landscape influence their visit and traveling purpose.

The hypotheses of this study are based on the elements and aesthetics of both rural and urban landscape and their relationship with social demographic variables of the inquiries. After validating the hypothesis, it is notable that there is a relation between the frequency of viewpoint visit and the inclusion of viewpoints on the travel plan of visitors.

This research showed, in general terms, the preference about “coastal landscape”, followed by “mountain landscape”. Concerning “Rural landscape features” and “aesthetic aspects”, the most valued are “sea and coastal line”, “grapevines and vineyards” “birds” and “wild animals”. Regarding “Urban landscape features” and “Urban aesthetic aspects”, the most valued elements are “historic buildings, churches/cathedrals, towers”, on the one hand, and “Preservation of buildings/structures”, on the other. Most respondents usually include viewpoint in their journey plans, while travelling.

In order to promote and enhance the attractiveness of viewpoints, as a result of the appreciation of the landscape, specific aspects should be discussed, such as the appropriation of these elements with infrastructures and equipment, integrating them into roadmaps, in order to maximize the potential of landscapes in the Northern region of Portugal.

Keywords: Rural landscape, Urban landscape, Tourism Resource, North of Portugal, Viewpoints.