



itc '23
international
tourism
congress

book of extended abstracts

XV International Tourism Congress
23rd to 25th of November
*The Image and Sustainability of
Tourism Destinations*

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Technical Data

Title

International Tourism Congress 2023: book of extended abstracts

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Publisher

Instituto Politécnico de Bragança

Editorial

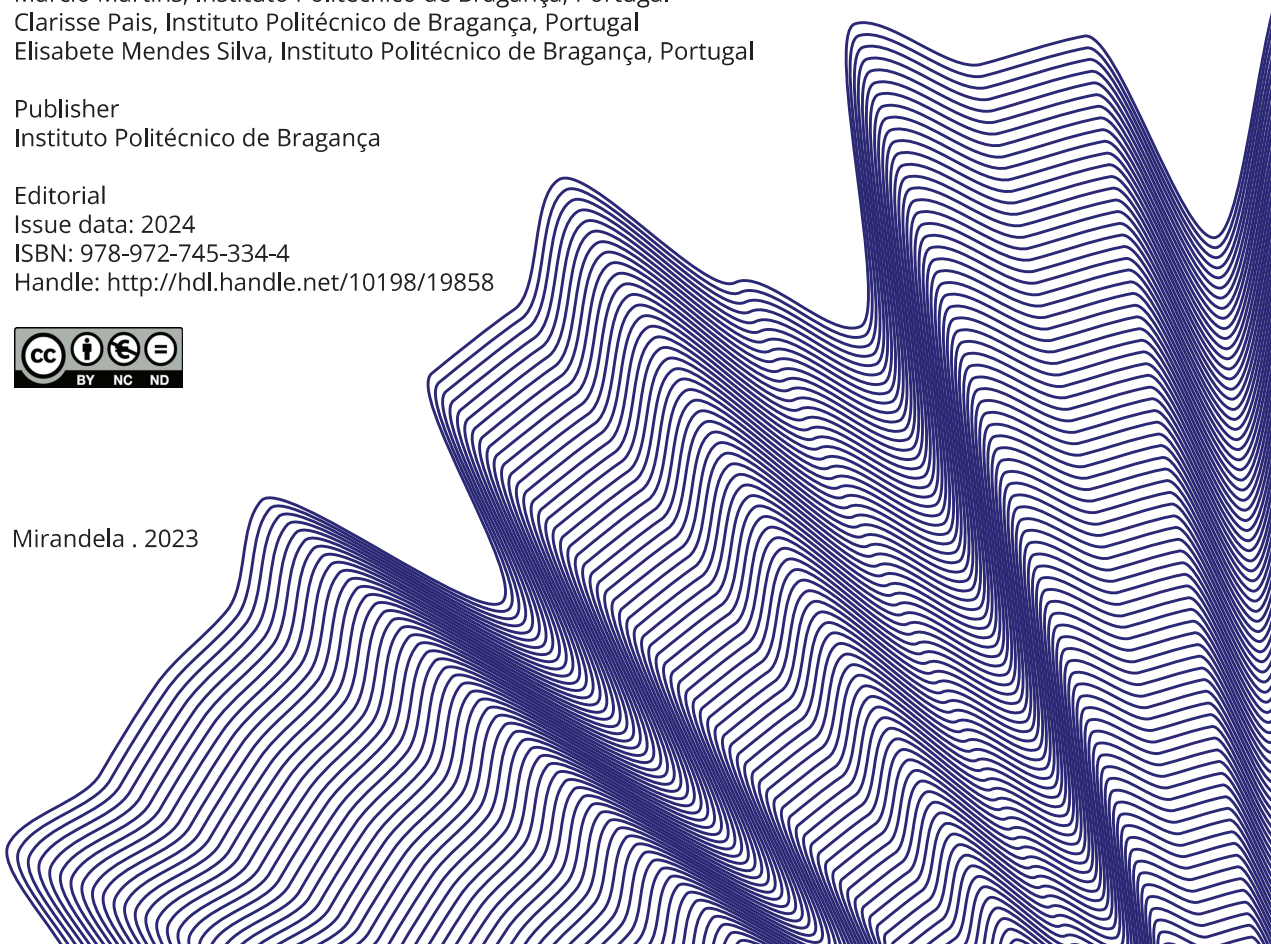
Issue data: 2024

ISBN: 978-972-745-334-4

Handle: <http://hdl.handle.net/10198/19858>



Mirandela . 2023



LITERARY TOURISM IN NORTHERN PORTUGAL: AN EXPLORATORY PERSPECTIVE

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Purpose – The present study intends to structure a tourist offer based on literary tourism, with the proposal of literary routes in the Northern region of Portugal, in particular the municipalities covered by the Regional Tourism Authority - Entidade Regional de Turismo do Porto e Norte (ERTPNP), through the dynamisation of its literary heritage and its socio-cultural stimulation. It is expected to contribute to the promotion of tourism policies oriented to the development of new products and experiences, based on the identity and specificities of the different territories involved, with relevant authors and works. In addition, it is expected to develop a prototype of an APP for the promotion and dynamisation of one of the literary routes, the most representative of the literary heritage of the region which will provide an immersive and rich experience. A process that will involve the different stakeholders.

Theoretical framework – Literature and travel are linked (Bu et al., 2021; Weiss, 2021). Literary tourism is currently emerging as a complex offer of connection between place and literary production, emphasizing a multidisciplinary approach that enriches the tourism offer in the territories involved, being still recent and reduced the connection between tourism and literature (Weiss, 2021). This type of tourism brings people closer to the literary heritage (Alghureiby, 2015; Grum-Schwensen & Frandsen, 2016; Jiang & Xu, 2016) visiting tangible and intangible heritage represented in literary works (Jiang & Yu, 2020) in its most diverse forms, genres, historical periods, and geographies (Alghureiby, 2015; Busby & Devereux, 2015; Gentile & Brown, 2015; Pennacchia, 2015; Yu & Xu, 2016). Literary tourism products and experiences are developed based on the relationship between literature and tourism (Quinteiro et al., 2020). Literary tourism encompasses visits to places related to literary works and their writers and usually includes visiting places highlighted in literature or places related to the lives of writers, being categorized as cultural tourism (Anjo et al., 2021; Bu et al., 2021; Ferreira et al., 2022; Weiss, 2021). Recently, the international market has been driven by links between literature, literary characters and film production that incorporate characters in real or imaginary places, with shared narratives and attributes (Ingram et al., 2021), birth and burial places of writers, imaginative locations, commercial attractions, literary routes, trails, and visits to literary festivals (MacLeod, 2021). Therefore, literature plays an important role in the promotion or marketing of a place, as well in literary tourism in the context of a city's tourism potential (Włodarczyk & Duda, 2019).

Design/methodology/approach – Identification and survey of writers/literary works in the NUTS II region; Application of a questionnaire survey to visitors in the considered region, based on questionnaires validated in other scientific studies; Construction of routes in the considered territory, associated with literary tourism (writers/work/life) and which will constitute a literary offer where people and professionals can collaborate, create, co-create and share knowledge.

Findings – The project aims to create a territorial database where a literary tourism development model can be applied through tourist routes. The criteria for applying the methodology will be based on: Cultural value of literary activities and their attractiveness to visitors; Literary nature of activities offered; Benefits for the local community; Involvement of the local community in the design of literary experiences; Relationship between visitors, local producers, and the local community; Use of local resources for the development of literary experiences; Use of digital techniques to develop engaging and participatory experiences.

Research, practical & social implications – The main functional innovation of route building, for literary narrative applied to tourism, lies in the possibility of developing an experience of (organized) co-creation of literary domain, which is one of the final objectives for the tourism sector in the future in Portugal. In addition, it will also contribute to exploring literary territories, attracting and retaining visitors, functioning as a management tool for the sector. The main objective of this construction (literary routes) for tourism is a literary offer where people and professionals can collaborate, create, co-create and share knowledge through their own experiences and expectations of a literary nature.

Originality/value – The project aims to support the exploitation and promotion of literary heritage through routes, leading to positive socio-economic and socio-cultural outcomes that improve the tourism competitiveness of the region and the quality of life of communities. Collaborative processes will be promoted between these territories and their stakeholders, ensuring the participation of the resident population and entrepreneurs from various sectors, personalities who can combine their creativity and innovation in the process of creating literary routes, in an effective collaboration between the municipalities involved and the different regional agents (civil society and public and private entities) of the Northern region. This collaborative approach ensures the sustainability and success of literary tourism initiatives. Ultimately, the framework of literary routes provides a well-structured and immersive experience for tourists, allowing them to connect with the literary heritage of the destination, preserve its legacy and appreciate the interaction between literature and the specific places associated with it.

Keywords – Digitization, Storytelling, Literary routes, Literary tourism, Destination development

FUNDING AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This work is financed by national funds through FCT – Foundation for Science and Technology, IP, within the scope of the reference project UIDB/04470/2020.

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