

The cultural resources' role in the field of future rural tourist supply for Madeira's country homes

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Abstract: The article intends to assess the impact of the cultural resources as a fundamental tourist attraction for Madeira Island's country homes in the future rural tourism supply. Madeira is a tourist destination with ancient tradition. Nowadays, the island's tourist supply is well-known worldwide, essentially for its natural resources, safety and natives' hospitality. Rural tourism is very recent on the island, it began in the late 20th century. Since its beginning, there hasn't really been a specific promotion for rural tourism, and country homes owners have been disseminating their ventures within general guidelines for Madeira's tourist promotion, without considering the heterogeneity of their visitors or even the segment in which this type of tourism is inserted in.

Based on inquiries launched to the country homes' visitors in Madeira and also on interviews conducted to the establishments' owners, we will present in this article this visitor's profile, non-existent to date, with special focus on the tourist's motivations and data that can give us a better understanding of the heterogeneity of this particular tourist segment and the importance of the cultural resources as a tourist attraction on future decisions regarding the promotion of rural tourism in Madeira.

Key words: rural tourism, cultural resources, country homes, Madeira

1. Introduction

The tourist activity's positive repercussions are well known, when this activity is well developed: it feeds the core of social and political circumstances and favours the preservation of cultural and environmental heritage while also improving the economy.

For Madeira's Archipelago, tourism is one of the primary sources of income which throughout the last two centuries has been moving and propelling the production of numerous activities, including the preservation and recuperation of the Archipelago's heritage.

The Archipelago is located in the North Atlantic Ocean, at approximately 1,000 kilometres southwest of the Portuguese mainland and about 600 kilometres west of the Moroccan coast. It is composed of two inhabited islands, Madeira and

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Porto Santo, and by the uninhabited islets of Desertas and Selvagens. Madeira Island is the biggest, with an approximate area of 740 square kilometres, which translates into 96,2% of the whole Archipelago (Ribeiro, 2012).

Given the territorial area of the Island, we deem licit to consider that Madeira boasts a rich natural heritage, in which we can distinguish the Laurissilva Forest, which in December 1999 was included on the List of World Natural Heritage Sites by UNESCO, as well as considerable historical and cultural heritage, with particular emphasis on monuments (churches, chapels, fortresses, palaces, etc.), villages with traditional architecture, traditions (customs, folklore, music), handicraft (embroidery, tapestry, wickerwork), wine (Madeira Wine), regional cuisine and some cultural activities of traditional nature (religious events, gastronomic weeks, traditional shows) and cultural itinerary excursions.

Rural tourism is very recent in Portugal and in particular in Madeira's Archipelago. In the last few decades rural tourism has been present in the country's development policies, in the midst of which, the revitalization of the rural economy. Studies about rural tourism in the Portuguese mainland (Batista and Ferreira, 2010; Cardosos, Durbiano and Gonçalves, 2009; Cavaco, 1999, 2004; Cavaco and Moreno, 2006; Cerro, Mogollón and Alves, 2010; Covas, 2004; Cravidão and Fernandes, 2004; Cristovão and Pereiro, 2012; Figueira, 1998; Jesus, Kastenholz and Figueiredo, 2008; Kastenholz, 2006; Mendes, 2010; Monteiro and Carvalho, 2006; Neves, 2008; Pereira, 2009; Pinto, 2004; Ribeiro, 2003; Silva, 2009, 2013a, 2013b) have revealed that this touristic segment has not yet reached the much coveted levels. In the case of Madeira's Archipelago and despite its later implementation, the developed efforts have been presenting positive repercussions, although these being slightly smaller than previously expected.

The choice for the present theme was based primarily on the relative absence of studies conducted in this area and our strong conviction that this, despite being implemented so recently in the Island, will be a solid bet which will potentiate Madeira's Autonomous Region's sustainable growth. Whatever the touristic region, the increment of a strategic plan to promote the destination is essential to assure that the conducted efforts reach the designated goals (García Henche, 2011, pp. 190–193). When we think about Madeira and especially about its rural tourism, the echo of this action is profoundly superior, since the touristic promotion underlines the offer's interaction with the touristic demand. At the heart of this criterion Cunha advocates that 'the promotion of places presents the world as an image, inviting the spectator to become an imaginary traveller to an imaginary place' (Cunha, 2007, p. 175).

For the regional promotion of the destination Madeira, the 'Madeira Brand' was created, which was entitled 'BODY.MIND.MADEIRA', which 'appeals to different looks', in spite of being mainly directed to the Island's natural resources (AP Madeira, 2012).

It is noted that the promotion made by public bodies to the destination Madeira, which was intended to evoke 'in the human being the desire to experience, feel and get to know the destination's distinct cultures, that is, awaken the consumption for alien singularities' (Cravidão and Marujo, 2012, p. 282), rural tourism is not included in any of the promotional materials, not even in the press files which may be found in Madeira's Promotion Association's web page (AP Madeira, 2012).

At the present time, Madeira's rural tourism promotion is being done by the owners of the rural establishments and by a local association named Rural Madeira Association, which also favours natural resources instead of cultural resources.

On the other hand, the National Strategic Plan for Tourism (PENT), revised in 2013, in the eight primary lines of action laid down for Madeira, reflects for the very first time in two of those lines the need to improve rural tourism's promotion in the sphere of natural and cultural resources (PENT, 2013):

i) In the religious and cultural touristic circuits, there is the need to value the geo-referenced resources and develop contents and information to the client, revise the events model thus extending the realization period concerning time and range of said events, stimulate and diversify experiences, mainly in rural tourism, and place the product in the market;

ii) Concerning tourism hikes through nature, there is the need to structure the offer, diversify experiences, mainly in rural tourism, create contents and release it in channels and placing hikes, bike/ horseback rides in the market. Facing the importance of the marine environment, scuba diving and similar activities should also be promoted.

In this article, we will begin with a brief conceptualization of rural tourism in general terms so that subsequently we can focus on Madeira Island. In the next stage we will present the results of the empirical study which allows us to affirm the importance of the cultural resources in the demand for Madeira's 'country homes'.

2. The rural tourism concept

Rural tourism is still difficult to define, even though we are aware that the first touristic fluxes stem from more developed population centres, being the main motivation for its residents the discovery of more secluded and less developed places.

Faced with the difficulty of defining the concept, we chose to guide ourselves by the clarification given by the World Tourism Organization (WTO): 'The concept of rural tourism embraces a number of constituent elements, at the heart of which lie the rural tourism community. Rural tourism is dependent on the countryside which an area has to offer, its heritage and culture, rural activities and rural life' (WTO, 2004, p. 13).

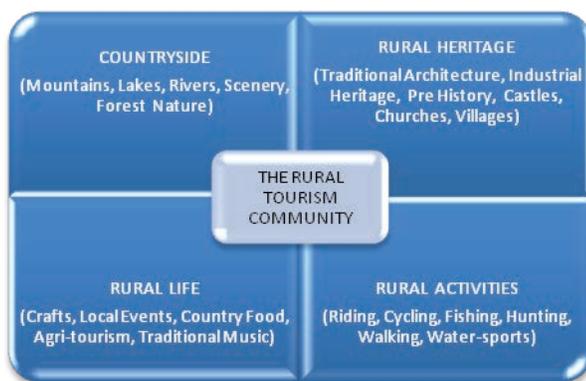


Figure 1. The rural tourism concept

Rural tourism in Portugal finds its most remote legal roots in 1978, and we can only conclude that starting from 1984, the concept of rural tourism began to be sketched in legal terms, highlighting the fact that the emergent concept overflows the mere question of touristic housing, since it should integrate ‘services of touristic interest in the fields of animation, craftsmanship, culture and even sports and the tourists’ enjoyment’ (Decree-Law no. 251/1984), which met the need to offer the tourist something genuine, thus drawing a standard of sustainable growth, where the social, cultural and environmental characteristics of the location would intertwine.

Facing the relevant interest of this kind of tourism to Portugal, in 1986, in the sequence of the National Plan of Tourism and the first guidelines to a community policy of tourism issued by the European Community Commission, a new legal diploma sought to create the necessary conditions for the correct development of the different kinds of rural tourism, which was in effect until 2008, the year when the new instalment, exploration and operation of touristic ventures’ legal system was published. Concerning rural tourism, some alterations were made, in particular, in the way these ventures were classified, which now could be: country homes, agrotourism and rural hotels (Decree-Law no. 39/2008). In January 2014, this Decree-Law suffered other reforms, which with today’s legislation in effect, rural tourism in Portugal now fits in the following parameters:

- Rural space concept:

Areas with traditional connection and significance to agriculture or to the environment and rural landscapes (Order-in-Council no. 937/2008, art. 4);

- Concept of tourism enterprises in rural areas:

Establishments which intend to provide accommodation services to tourists in rural areas, shall preserve, restore and enhance the architectural, historic natural and landscape heritage of the localities and regions where they are located, through reconstruction, rehabilitation or enlargement of existing buildings in order to ensure their harmony with the surroundings (Decree-Law no. 15/2014, art. 18);

- The classification of the venture will be subject to:

The landscape setting, the surrounding rural amenities, the environmental quality and the appreciation of local products and services (Order-in-Council no. 937/2008, art. 4°);

- Concept of country homes:

Properties located in villages and rural areas which, for their architecture, building materials and other characteristics fit in with the typical local architecture (Decree-Law no. 15/2014, art. 18).

The beginning of rural tourism in Madeira was marked by very similar principles to those developed in the Portuguese mainland, in spite of it being implemented a decade later. The first statistic data date back to 1998, despite knowing that some establishments began activity as early as 1996.

3. Rural tourism’s visitors’ motivations

The motifs behind the trip are without a doubt fundamental when it comes to the touristic destination: ‘when people travel there is a reason behind it, that implies the existence of some motive or cause which aims to reach a certain goal’ (WTO, 1998, p. 71).

According to Cooper, the socio-psychological factors are crucial in the touristic demand: 'At the personal level it is clear that the factors influencing demand for tourism are closely linked to models of consumer behaviour. No two individuals are alike and differences in attitudes, perceptions, images and motivation have an important influence on travel decisions' (Cooper, 2006, p. 52). According to Cunha, these factors can be subdivided in social, personal and cultural. The social factors focus primarily on the need to escape; the personal, on each individual's particular desires; and the cultural, on the will to improve knowledge and on the 'spirit of imitation' (Cunha, 2007, pp. 149–150).

The touristic motivation covers an indeterminate set of motifs that relate to the personal action of each visitor (Meckercher and Lew, 2004, pp. 57–70), it is what the visitor looks for or what he is made to believe that it is necessary for him, that is why 'our knowledge of the tourist's motifs is extremely limited, due to the potential importance of those motifs in the appropriate framing of the product conception and commercialization' (Prentice, 2004, p. 297). The area of touristic motifs has been seriously contested, there are different models and paradigms. The models are essentially based on the psychological dimension, they take care of the individuals; the paradigms belong to the sociological forum and focus mainly on the study of tourists as groups (WTO, 1998, pp. 71–75). Let us not stretch this aspect anymore and let's stick to the touristic motivations as the desire or need to, that is, the stimulating source that led to the visit.

To date there have not been done specific studies about the profile of the tourist who seeks Madeira's rural tourism, this segment has been included in general studies, making it impossible to analyze it deeply. However, between the diverse studies conducted about the profile of this visitor in Portugal, Maria Monteiro and Filipe Carvalho offer us a composite Picture of the same (Monteiro and Carvalho, 2006, p. 55):

Today's tourist is, ever more, a green consumer, with growing environmental awareness and sensitivity to local cultures, who seeks defying and authentic experiences, which are healthier and more flexible, contrasting with the rising urbanization of the places he lives in. He enjoys outdoor activities, buys local genuine and differentiated products, consumes the touristic product ethical and affectionally, pursuits good level services and is able to make comparisons.

The study of the visitors' profile offers us essential data required to analyze touristic demand: In order to analyze tourism demand (and its various market segments) it is important to link information on the personal characteristics of the visitor (profile) with information on the purpose, behaviour and habits of the visitor (characteristics of the visit) (Eurostat, 1998, p. 9).

This European study shows us some divergences relating to the studies conducted in Portugal, especially in the context of touristic motivations. We acknowledge in these differences, the relevance of the segmentation which rules the rural tourism's clients, whereby in the present article we decided to identify the profile of Madeira's rural tourists, in particular those who visit the country homes, once '[t]he relative importance of a destination in terms of tourism is determined by the potential visitors' (WTO, 2007, p. 49).

The motivations and needs of the visitors are in constant mutation, therefore all touristic destinations must possess mechanisms that identify the potential changes so they can adapt their product to the new demand.

4. Methodology

Results from a broader study were used in the present article, concerning the development of rural tourism in Madeira, focusing primarily on the country homes and their implications in the preservation and recuperation of the regional heritage, seeking to contribute to a more profound knowledge concerning the development of the Island's rural tourism and the definition of future strategies.

In this perspective and in general terms, the following objectives were set, in the elaboration of this article:

- Identifying the profile of the visitor who seeks country homes in Madeira, facing the segmentation found in rural tourism's clientele;
- Demonstrating the relevance of cultural resources as a touristic motivation/ attraction to this kind of visitor.

The choice of the category country homes was based on the scarce number of rural housing units in Madeira in the other categories. Given the receptiveness of these ventures in the collaboration of the present investigation, we defined as a study area for our sample six different counties in Madeira Island: Calheta, Ponta do Sol, Porto Moniz, Ribeira Brava, Santa Cruz and Santana.

In order to pursue our objectives, a bibliographical research on the theme and concepts implicated within that theme was conducted.

The non-existence of studies concerning rural tourism in Madeira confronted us with the need to elaborate semi-structured interviews and questionnaires extensively conducted to many informers, in particular to businessmen and tourists. This supplied us with valuable data through the information gathered which allowed us to fulfil our objectives.

Of the 34 country homes existing in Madeira 16 agreed to collaborate in the present study, which ensured a good representation of the sample (47%), in relation to the number of ventures and geographical localization, as with the number of replies to the interviews, in relation with the universe in question.

We opted for delivering copies of the questionnaires to be filled by visitors, between the months of June and October of 2012, to the owners or representatives of the country homes.

The replies to the questionnaires ensured a good representation of the sample, which was considered to be reliable, as the 164 replies to the 'Visitor's Questionnaire' represented 44,1% of the total housing accommodation capacity of Madeira's country homes.

The present study was supplemented by the investigator's visit to the collaborative country homes, this aimed to deepen our knowledge about the facilities and their surroundings. These visits allowed us to compare what we had observed and the knowledge acquired previously, as well as to make relevant conclusions that aided our description and interpretation of the reality in question.

5. Results

Profile of Madeira's country homes' visitor

Based on the results of the questionnaires conducted to the tourists, we deemed relevant to conclude that the **socio-demographic and economic profile** of this visitor anchors on the following features:

- reside overseas (92.1%);
- they consist of couples and families (83.5%);
- prevalence of age group between 30 and 59 years (80%);
- have higher education (80.5%);
- they exercise an economic activity (88.4%);
- in their professional occupation, managers and liberal professions are highlighted (50.6%);
- have a medium-high economic-financial level (71.3%).

In relation to **travel and motivation**, we are able to conclude that the visitor of Madeira's country homes sports the following features:

- does not repeat the destination Madeira (79.9%);
- 'the main reason to visit' is practicing 'tourism' (64.6%);
- the choice for rural tourism—country homes, is based essentially and, by decreasing order of importance, on the following factors:
 - tranquillity and rest (64,6%);
 - contact with nature (48,2%);
 - contact with local culture (42,1%);
 - familiar environment (36%);
 - contact with local people (36%);
 - information gathering about the country homes through the Internet/ Social Network (63.4%);
 - book in advance the housing (58.6%) and the transportation (71.3%), primarily through the Internet.

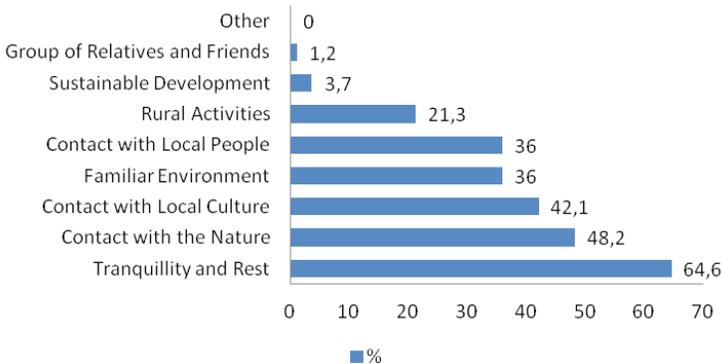


Figure 2. Rural tourism's deciding factors—country homes¹

Source: Author's own elaboration on the basis of data provided through the country homes' visitor's questionnaires (2012).

¹ There was no limit in the number of indicated responses.

The findings of the interviews conducted to the owners of the country homes corroborated in their vast majority the visitor's profile, previously sketched. The deviation was registered in the choosing factors for the country homes. Accordingly to the majority of owners, this visitor seeks the Island's rural tourism above all because of its natural resources, and shows no interest in its cultural resources. This perspective, based on the non-existence of specific studies about rural tourism in Madeira, motivates them to promote their ventures uniquely by the Island's natural resources.

Nowadays the dissemination and marketing of the rural tourism's offer in Madeira neglects the Island's cultural resources. However, if we meditate on these visitors' profiles, we can claim that people are well informed and know exactly which kind of tourism they are looking for and despite the fact that in the motifs to choose rural tourism, the 'contact with Nature' is left to second place, the 'contact with local culture' is actually left to third place, making the small difference visible between the number of replies, so that Madeira's cultural resources show a special relevance in the touristic demand in this market segment, deserving clearly a superior promotion in future strategies.

6. Conclusions

Madeira is a touristic destination with ancestral tradition. To many, tourism gave its first steps right after the Archipelago's official discovery, early in the 15th century; to others, it is a touristic destination over two centuries old. Despite the divergence in opinion, there is a consensus: that in the second half of the eighteenth century tourism was already practiced in Madeira.

These days Madeira is a touristic destination better known for its endogenous resources, in particular its climate, its beautiful landscapes, its natural heritage, its resident's hospitality and its safety.

For Madeira's rural tourist 'practicing tourism' was his/ her main motivation for the visit and the main factor that motivated him/ her to choose that particular rural tourism unit was 'tranquillity and rest' (64.6% of the answers), followed by two other factors, 'contact with nature' (48.2% of the answers) and 'contact with local culture' (42.1% of the answers).

The results of the survey released to the country homes' visitors showed that this visitors' primary motivation was not solely based on the natural resources the Island has to offer, but also showed that the Island's cultural resources have some representativeness, verifying between both, a reduced difference in the number of answers, in the order of 6.1%.

However, it should be taken into account that the divulgation material used by the country homes' owners shows an image highlighting the natural resources instead of the cultural, whether in the houses' description or in the activities suggested to the visitors, therefore we believe this fact may have interfered in the surveys released to the visitors.

Considering that '[a]uthentic and distinctive products and "experiences" of high quality are critical factors in the establishment of an appealing rural tourism destinations' (WTO, 2004, p. 236), it becomes essential for rural tourism's sustainable growth in Madeira the establishment of a national, regional and local strategy which allows a successful rural tourism industry, through the inclusion in PENT of a specific line of action for rural tourism in Madeira and

the elaboration of a Rural Tourism Master Plan, in which the Island's cultural resources are valued and taken into consideration, along with the natural resources, as well as the creation of specific events for this touristic segment.

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Znaczenie zasobów kultury w rozwoju turystyki wiejskiej na Maderze

Abstrakt: Celem artykułu jest prezentacja wartości zasobów kulturowych jako kluczowej atrakcji turystycznej portugalskiej wyspy Madera w kontekście rozwoju turystyki wypoczynkowej opartej na wynajmie domów wiejskich. Madera od pradawnych czasów była celem wycieczek turystycznych. Obecnie walory turystyczne wyspy są dobrze znane na całym świecie, w szczególności jej zasoby naturalne, bezpieczeństwo i szeroko pojęta gościnność mieszkańców. Jednakże rozwój typowych usług rynku agroturystyki na wyspie rozpo-

czął się dopiero pod koniec XX wieku. Od początku nie było konkretnej promocji wspomnianej formy turystyki wypoczynkowej, a właściciele oferowali do wynajmu swoje wiejskie domy, biorąc pod uwagę jedynie ogólne wytyczne w zakresie promocji Madery, a nie uwzględniając różnorodności ani też rodzaju turystyki, do którego agroturystyka jest przypisana. W oparciu o analizę ankiety przeprowadzonej wśród gości, a także na podstawie informacji uzyskanych od właścicieli domów wiejskich oferowanych do wynajmu w artykule prezen-

towany jest – nieistniejący do tej pory – profil gościa ze szczególnym uwzględnieniem jego potrzeb i motywacji turystycznych oraz danych, które mogą wpłynąć na lep-

sze zrozumienie różnorodności tego segmentu turystyki oraz wykorzystania zasobów kulturowych jako szczególnych atrakcji, promując agroturystykę na Maderze.

Słowa kluczowe: agroturystyka, zasoby kulturowe, domy wiejskie, Madera
