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SPECIFIC RESOURCES AS BASES FOR THE DIFFERENTIATION AND INNOVATION OF TOURIST DESTINATIONS¹

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ABSTRACT

Key - Words: Specific resources, idiographic approach, innovation, tourist destination, sustainability, regional development.

Given that one type of tourist does not exist and different strategies are drawn to reach the wished "extraordinary" by tourists for holidays, there are windows of opportunities to the tourist destinations, as these give them the chance for differentiated offers and for a flexibility that opposes uniformity and gives place to variety and difference. Assuming that the development of the destinations do not obey to just a standard way, and alternatively is embedded in the historical, cultural, institutional and natural matrices of the regions where destinations are anchored, then the specific resources of a place can assume the basic role of inputs for the differentiation of the tourist destination and for the diversification of its tourist offers.

Taking into account the exceptionality of tourist product as an experience, which is associated with an integrated experience offer, one can say that an idiographic perspective of a destination requires that the valuation of its specific resources pass not only for the tourist services providers to assume themselves as agents who facilitate the stay and the mobility of the tourists, but also that they need to become ambassadors of all the kind of services of the destination as well as of the region itself.

Such tourist destination generates change. As it generates differentiated strategies at the regional level and as it is based on co-operation and network, these strategies and related facts make the environment propitious to the dissemination of knowledge and innovation. Innovation, in turn, generates difference, that strengthens the identity of the region, and potentially, of the tourist destination. Such strategies of differentiation, in a sustainable development frame, can be the turning point for a more selective tourist industry, and where all can win: the local communities, the tourists, the tourist agents, and the environment.

¹ This paper is mostly based on the Doctoral Thesis under the title Regional Development of Tourism, April 2005, University of Beira Interior, Covilhã.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Tourism is often mentioned as a solution to the multiple macroeconomic problems faced by the depressed peripheral regions, where small and medium firms predominate and struggle for survival. Also to the level of the tourist activity these type of firms constitute the "vertebral column" of the tourist product, being considered key actors in the economic reorganization and in the revivifying of those regions, mostly because these small companies are thought to be better integrated in the local economies and presenting a lesser propensity for importations than the large-scale ones.

The intense competition of the last decades has determined a great attention to the non-price factors besides (or because) of the widening of the market of the tangible and intangible products, to be consumed by the tourists. In this context, the quality of the diverse firms and institutions, directly or indirectly involved in the tourism, as well as the evaluation of the satisfaction of the customers/visitors become essential to the diverse agents as well as to the diverse tourist destinations.

The evaluation of a tourist destination, in the perspective of its visitor, corresponds to a holistic evaluation (Gyimóthy, 2000) of his stay in this destination, and this stay includes different meetings with the services suppliers, with the local population and with another tourists. This means that the evaluation of the satisfaction of the visitor cannot be restricted to the analysis of a few suppliers, since the "sum of the parts" cannot be the same altogether, in terms of the evaluation of a destination.

To be perceived, the quality of a tourist destination must be evaluated in the context of the experience that the visitor lived, as he is the point of convergence of the different suppliers of tourist services: he is the final consumer of the tangible and intangible goods and the last carrier of the experience. And if the experience will be positive, the visitor will carry with him the motivation to return and the information that will be able to motivate other visitors to come to this destination.

However, much little is known concerning the form as the visitors integrate and surpass, in their experiences as tourists, their individual perception or their understanding on the service that is offered them. As Roberts says (1999) the explanation for the diverse behaviours in leisure time depends more in the understanding of the type of people than in the diverse types of leisure, as these times must consider the global situation of the individual and the ample contribution of the leisure to the different ways or styles of life.

If, as MacCannell says (1999), the celebration of the difference and the diversity is looked universally by the tourism and can assume different forms, then the visitors will expect from a tourist destination that it possess characteristics and attributes that substantially differentiate it from what they have in their daily life.

This fact is attached to the peculiarity of the tourist product and to the necessity of its redefinition: the fact is that the travel or the journey of a visitor is more than the mere passage in a destination through the space and the time. It is also an experience frequently connoted with adventure, change and learning, with psychological deep impacts in the visitor as well as impacts on the receiving region.

From the point of view of the receiving region, the question is to know how the offer, corresponding to the expectation of the demand in finding the "difference" in the visited places, will be able to contribute to the reinforcement of the differentiated image of the spaces, without compromising the viability of the tourism of small scale (sustainable tourism) and the retention of effects in the different regions and also without compromising the necessary dispersal of the activity, in order to help to relieve the tourist load felt by some regions in some epochs of the year.

The main question is to know if the expectations can correspond to the reality and up to which point are the interests of the visitors and of the visited ones reconcilable.

The answer to the above-mentioned question corresponds to the essence or to the mission of the present work. It is expected that this paper contributes to a growing interdisciplinary knowledge of the tourism, at the same time that, when illuminating areas that are differently emphasized by the demand and by the supply sides, one expect to contribute to a better performance and integration of the small and medium enterprises connected with the tourist sector, in a perspective of increase in value-added of the existent and differentiators resources of the regions.

The present work is structured as follow: after a short reference to the theoretical and conceptual frame, we will notice an empirical study carried out in an inner region of the centre of Portugal, called Beira Interior. For that, and after we characterize the region, the underlying objectives and the methodology of the empirical investigation will be presented. Subsequently we will present the obtained results and the conclusions.

2. THEORETICAL AND CONCEPTUAL FRAME

2.1 The Emphasis on the Endogenous Diversity of Development

In the context of the process of globalization, the current economical system is characterized for an apparent paradox: the integration of the national and regional economies in the global context underlies the importance of the local context in the process of innovation (Wolfe, 2002). This fact puts the regions and localities facing new opportunities, which result from the unique capacity in setting themselves up as learning and innovation centres.

From the point of view of the endogenous development, it is possible to say that the experiences of territorial development do not obey to a just one standard way since while being taken root in the historical, cultural, institutional and natural matrices of the regions, they give to the territory a flexibility that opposes the uniformity to the variety and to the difference. Being in mind that those matrices, the resources and the actors, and the relations that are established between all, are not identical in all the spaces.

As Crevoisier (2002) says, a territory marked by the innovation, it always suits the previous system (matrice territory) and it is from the dynamics of this one which that one results. The elements that constitute it, namely the specific resources, the rules of functioning, an own territory, a technical culture and of interdependences, are the mark and the expression of the previous functioning of the system and these elements only become resources in so far as the environment becomes dynamic and innovative.

In this context, the innovation is understood as a process of differentiation: differentiation through the different ways of how to mobilise the resources, and also through the specific resources, as soon as these mark the difference between a region and other one. Therefore the innovation and the specificity of the resources are like two faces of the same process (Colletis and Pecquer, 1995).

Notice that these specific resources, namely the history, the culture, the natural resources, the local know-how, the relations networks, the ways of organization, the institutions, the population, the social and economical systems, because of being locally embedded and territorially anchored, determine the specificity of this territory, and, as such, they are able of differentiating it from other territories.

Now it is exactly the need of knowing and being in touch with these specific resources that determine the demand of the variety and of the difference which underlies the current tourist motivations, being in this context in which such resources are transformed into tourist resources and tourist specific products.

The same thing is to say that a territory faced like a tourist destination, must to identify, to value and to promote its own resources, mobilizing them in an innovatory way and, in this context, being differentiated from other territories, taking from this its competitive advantages.

Nevertheless, it is necessary to have in mind that if the specific resources may guarantee a competition base between the destinations, the cooperation and the complementarities (be in a local or regional base) are probably the principal ways of guaranteeing the global coherence of these destinations and the preservation and reinforcement of its identity.

The several dimensions (Gyimóthy, 2000) through which the tourist values the way a tourist destination turns on his holidays into an extraordinary event, demand on the part of the several services suppliers, organizations, institutions and agents, be tourist or not, and also on the part of the population itself, this notion of cooperation and of complementarities, pursuing a common goal: the sustainable development, in the whole its ample meaning.

2.2 The Emphasis in the Tourist Destination as a Product

Silva et al (2001, p. 11) conceive the tourist product like an element of connection between the supply and the demand, that constitutes the focus of the whole process of analysis and of evaluation of the perceived quality, both by the tourists and by the others intervenient in the process of the tourist service provisioning.

This composite or global tourist product concept referred by those authors (*op. cit.*, 2001, p. 12) corresponds to an integrated conception of product which can be identified therefore as synonym of Tourist Destination, as its tangible and intangible elements are reflected in the whole reality experienced by the tourists at a destination.

In this perspective we will have to consider that a tourist destination is bigger than the sum of the interests, activities, equipments and infrastructures, because to all of these we must also add the symbolic meanings carried out by the products and services, namely the tourist ones, which may have influence on the experience of the tourist and

on the evaluation they do about the destination. We have in mind that the tourists do not buy the tourist product on account of what it is, but because of what the product means for them, as Gyimóthy (2000) says. This is the reason why the same author defends that a tourist destination must be focused in the quality of the whole experience lived by the visitor and not only in the usual services of accommodation and restoration supplied in the destination, and so, identifying a tourist destination as a “localised multi-product” where the suppliers' network performance can be compromised by the single fault of one of them, affecting the global perception that the tourist has from the destination, while consumer.

It is this concept of destination, approached as a localised multi-product, the one adopted in the present work; so much more that it is linked to the concept of the composite or global product referred by Silva *et al* (2001).

2.3. The Emphasis in the Endogenous Diversity of the Development of the Tourist Destinations

2.3.1. Specific resources as bases for the differentiation and innovation of the tourist destinations

As just one type of tourist does not exist and different strategies are drawn to reach the "extraordinary" so looked by tourists for their holidays, these are windows of opportunities to the tourist destinations, as they give them the chance for differentiated offers and for a flexibility that opposes the uniformity to the variety and the difference. Assuming that the development of the destinations do not obey to a just one standard way, and alternatively is embedded in the historical, cultural, institutional and natural matrices of the regions where destinations are anchored, then the specific resources of a place can assume the basic role of inputs for the differentiation of the tourist destination and for the diversification of its tourist offers, allowing an idiographic approach of the destinations.

Having in account the exceptionality of tourist product as an experience, associated with an integrated experiences offer, one can say that an idiographic perspective of a destination demands that the valuation of its specific resources pass not only for the tourist services providers to assume themselves as agents who facilitate the stay and the mobility of the tourists, but also that they need to become ambassadors of all the kind of services of the destination as well as of the region itself.

Such tourist destination generates change. As it generates differentiated strategies at the regional level and as it is based in co-operation and network, these make the propitious environment to the dissemination of the knowledge and the innovation. And the innovation, in turn, generates difference, that strengthens the identity of the region, and potentially, of the destination. Such strategies of differentiation, in a sustainable development frame, can be the point of turn for a more selective tourist industry, and where all the local communities, the tourists, the tourist agents, and the environment can be the winners.

By one side, the tourist resources (namely those based in the specific resources) and the actors are not identical in all the tourist destinations; by other, while producing standards of differentiated behaviours, the different choices (the different tourist demands, or the different segments of the tourist demand) demand on the part of the

involved, public and private agents, differentiated answers, with obvious space implications.

Such differentiated answers, while taking the specific resources of each tourist destination as a base, are able of marking the difference between a destination and another in the plan of the innovation and so contributing to the reinforcement of the competitive advantages of the region where such destinations are anchored.

2.3.2 Cooperation and complementarities. Base of sustenance of the tourist destinations

Framke (2001) says that the interaction, the cooperation, the networking and the social practices are crucial activities to describe a destination, its content, its relations and its tourists. Also Silva *et al* (2001) admit that the performance of a tourist destination reflects the relations of complementarities which can be established between several public and private contributors, direct and indirectly connected with the sector' services providers.

For Molstad *et al.* (1999), cooperation is a way of sharing responsibilities and also a way of reaching the goals of a sustainable development: when the different skills and contributions are used, they are able to overcome some difficulties like the depredation of the resources or like the leakage of the income effects produced by the tourism, or still with the short term vision of the enterprises, more worried about the immediate profits than with a long term management of the resources, for example.

Also the UNESCO (2001) says that it is necessary an enormous effort of co-ordination and of integration of some crucial sectors, couple with radical alterations in the behaviours and ways of life, including alterations in the standards of consumption and of production, in order the sustainability to be reached.

In this context, as Maillat and Kebir (1998) defend, the approach of the territorial development linked to the need of stimulating the mobility and the reproduction of specific resources, can be maintained only on basis of a system of trade and non-trade relations, based on the confidence and on the long term. As it defends the theory of the innovative environment, the territorial logic implicates a simultaneous action of the network of interaction and of the learning dynamics.

According to Maillat, Quévit and Senn (1993), the concept of environment corresponds to a relational capital which involves a system of production, a technical culture and a collective of actors, grouped coherently and in constant interaction with his surrounding environment, in a process of collective learning.

In this context and following the authors' logic already referred, we consider to be able to classify a tourist destination as innovative when this one establishes its development in the innovation as a competitive base and not in the production costs, in the competition between territories and not between enterprises and in the network organization of the productive system, being in mind that the understanding of the processes of innovation demands a multidimensional context (economical, political, cultural, etc.) and the consideration of the different levels (local, regional, national, world-wide) in what such processes unfold.

3. EMPIRICAL RESEARCH

3.1 The Starting point

The starting point of the empirical investigation focus the idea of how a tourist destination, approached as a tourist integrated product and when valued in the context of the total tourist experience, allows to corroborate the idea that a tourist destination is “bigger than the sum of the parts” and that the satisfaction of the holistic experiences of tourists, are able to mean competitive advantages for the region where the tourist destination is anchored.

If, as defend several authors, the visitors expect to find in a destination characteristics that differentiate it of what they have in their daily life and if it is the difference that is on basis of the construction of a destination perception, so this tourist destination must be different in order to go on being a destination.

As the total holiday perception is composed not only by the products and services that are at the disposal of the tourists in the target place, but also for the sensations and/or experiences that destination can provide, we wanted to know the relative importance attributed to several items by the tourists that visit a Portuguese inner region called Beira Interior and what were the tangible and intangible aspects of this experience. This is why we inquired, in August 2002, 217 tourists³ that visit the area in order to know what was important to them during their stay and what was the items that satisfied them more, in order to assess the tourist offer of the region while tourist destination.

The factorial analysis method allowed to detect the principal components of the service providers while facilitators of the stay and of the mobility of tourists as well as mediators or ambassadors of the services and of the region where tourist destination is anchored. Following Gyimóthy (2001), both these roles of facilitators and of mediators attributed by the tourists to the tourist offer contribute to enriches the experiences in holidays, be at the level of the satisfaction of normal and basic needs, be at the level of superior needs that improve the experiences and the quality of life of the tourists.

4. THE METHODOLOGY OF THE EMPIRICAL STUDY

In agreement with William Trochim (2001), professor in the Cornell University, a process of investigation involves an eclectic combination of different and numerous activities and skills. Though not considering the list as exhaustive, the author mentionate certain terms that help to describe some of the key aspects of the contemporary investigation in the area of the social sciences, namely the terms theoretical, empirical, nomothetic, idiographic, probabilistic and causal.

Contrasting the theoretical and the empirical, Trochim (2001) argues that the social investigation is theoretical, in the sense in which it is concerned with the development, exploration or test of theories or ideas the social investigators have about the way the reality unrolls; but it is also empirical, since it is based on observations and measurement of the reality. In this context one understands the position of an investigator in the area of the social and human sciences when he tries to combine the theoretical and the empirical approach, because such procedure means to compare the

³ After consultation of relevant bibliography (Veal, 1992; Ryan, 1995; Trochim, 2000) was decided to opt for the construction of an intentional non probabilistic sample, selected from a non proportional quota.

theories about the way the world operate with the observations that are done from its operations.

Besides the conceptual and theoretical revision, it was in this context that we considered opportune to start from the theoretical model of Gyimóthy (2000), which we will explain later, and test it, comparing the results with the observations we did in our geographical area of study.

Also for opposition, the same author (Trochim, 2001) contrasts the nomothetic and the idiographic approaches. From the point of view of the social analysis, nomothetic refers to laws or rules that belong to general cases and it is contrasted with the term idiographic since this term is connected with something individual or unique. Trochim (2001) tells that a lot of the investigation in the social area is centred in the nomothetic aspects – the general cases – more than in the individual ones, so though very often the individual is an object of study, the final interest is usually the generalization over an individual and, if possible, for the whole population.

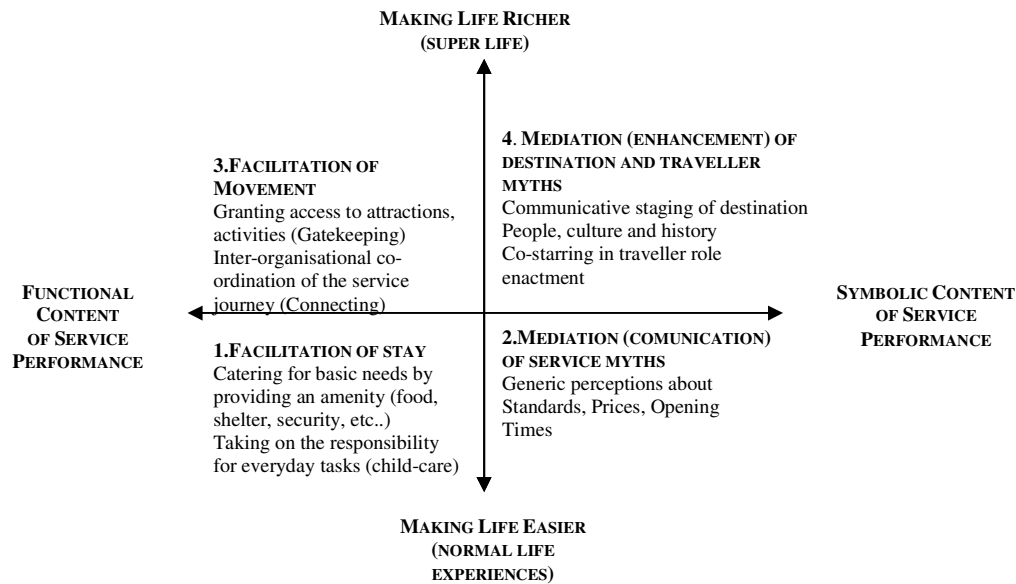
At this level, the question we faced was up to what point our final objective was the generalization, having in mind that the peculiarity of a tourist destination is an essential and integrant part of the thesis that we defend: which is that the tourism, while underlying the differentiated capacities of the regions, can contribute to the construction of its competitive advantages. On the other side, one of the principal objects of analysis was the holistic experience lived by the tourists in the destination area. How generalize individual experiences since the total holiday's perception is composed not only by the products and services that are at the disposal of a tourist in the destination place, but also for the sensations that such destination is capable to awake? Is it possible to identify each experience with natural processes that take place with perfect regularity, according to invariable laws and, consequently, to be generalized?

We considered overcoming these questions by two ways. By one side, the use of the phenomenology as an approach to the qualitative method, allows focusing in subjective experiences and personal ways of interpretation. By another side, an approach of the destination in its idiographic aspects allows to highlight its individual or unique characteristics. If the subjective experiences and personal ways of interpretation emphasize the difference as the base of the perception construction of the destination, then this one just can be approached from an idiographic point of view. How to conciliate these two perspectives? Through the analysis of the way how the tourists (the demand side) assess the destination (the supply side; the offer of the tourist integrated product).

This is why we adopted and adapted the theoretical “customer-oriented model of service provider assessment” of Gyimóthy (2000), to our goals and methodology⁴. The model of Gyimóthy, which we notice following, intends to integrate the individual experience of the visitor, the perceived quality and the satisfaction obtained in the assessment done by the visitor to the tourist supply (be of an individual supplier or an integrated offer, be of the whole tourist destination), defining four dimensions for the effect.

⁴ The author just followed a qualitative approach, while we followed a mix approach: qualitative and quantitative methods.

Figure 1 - A customer-oriented model of service provider assessment



Source: Gyimóthy, 2000, p 173

As we can see the model defines four dimensions along the two axes, from which the visitor assesses the tourist service that is provided to him in a tourist destination. The dimensions number 1 and number 3 are related with the role of the tourist service providers while facilitators of the stay and of the movement of visitors and the functional contents of services. The other dimensions are related with the symbolic contents of the services and of the tourist destination; i.e., with the role of the tourist service providers while mediators or ambassadors of the whole existent services and of the receiving region or tourist destination itself. As Gyimóthy says, the model does not define any hierarchy between the several roles, not so somewhat establishes orders of greatness between the functions of mediation and of facilitators for the simple reason that different visitors can emphasize different aspects of their assessment, depending on the ideal that they have on holidays (for example, some can value more the functional aspects of the services, while others can value more the symbolic aspects and experiences which they obtain in exchange of monetary values or not).

In other words, this model allows a multidimensional evaluation about the role that the tourist providers fulfil in the experience of the visitor, being also of highlighting its applicability not only to an individual service provider level, but also to the level of an integrated offer, and still to the tourist destination as a whole.

In this context, the drawing of our research necessarily had to contain questions that, in some form, fit it in a picture of evaluation, namely in a set of rules from which it is possible to determine up to which point the project in assessment, goes and meets the standards previously definite. This is what Veal (1992, p. 2) classifies as evaluative research, what wraps the emission of valuable judgements about the success or efficiency of determined politics, programs, projects or services. In the essence, the evaluative research wraps basically comparisons (Veal, 1992, p. 172), which necessarily means the establishment of criteria of evaluation of the performance or the existence of

terms of reference Veal (1992) says that the concepts involved in this type of investigation will not be necessarily connected a few with others, not being for effects of the establishment of criteria of evaluation. On the other side, the same author tells (op.cit., 1992, p. 3), quoting Sadish *et al* (1991), that in the field of the leisure and of the tourism, this type of investigation orientated for the assessment has not been very much explored, being more worn-out in any areas of public politics, namely in the education.

In the context of our investigation, descriptive and relational questions were drawn, but also of assessment: descriptive questions which allow to define a profile of the tourists' type that demand the area in study; relational questions because they allow to investigate if there are relations between the variables; questions of assessment because from the degree of importance and of satisfaction of the tourists, we intended to value the performance of the tourist destination, comparing it simultaneously with the assessment model of tourist destination of Gyimóthy (2000).

Since it is possible to gather from what was said up to here about all these methodological questions, a mixed approach underlying our study we used, in the sense of qualitative and quantitative methods of analysis had been combined. In fact and having present the goals of our study, we can say that from the epistemological and ontological point of view our approach was qualitative as soon as we focused ourselves in the subjective experience of the tourist while a way of evaluation of the destination performance. The data gathered through individual structured interviews, though being essentially of qualitative nature, allowed a quantitative treatment, in an attempt of evaluation of the performance of the geographical area in study in tourist terms and in the optics of its consumers – the tourists. On the other side, the dimension and construction of the sample was drawn to allow the application of determined statistical tests, namely the T test for independent samples and the ANOVA test, between others that at its time we will set out.

The treatment of the data obtained through the inquiries by direct interview was done through the statistical software SPSS – Statistical Package for the Social Science, version 11.0, having all the statistical tests been effectuated considering a level of significance of 5 %. Relatively to the statistical tests were essentially used the T test for independent samples and the tests of Analysis of the Simple Variance (ANOVA) whenever the conditions of applicability allowed it; in the cases that it was not possible, it was used the Kruskal-Wallis Test, a non parametric test. Whenever significant differences were detected between the variables in analysis there was in use the test of multiple comparison of Bonferroni for identification of the groups where such a difference(s) was registered.

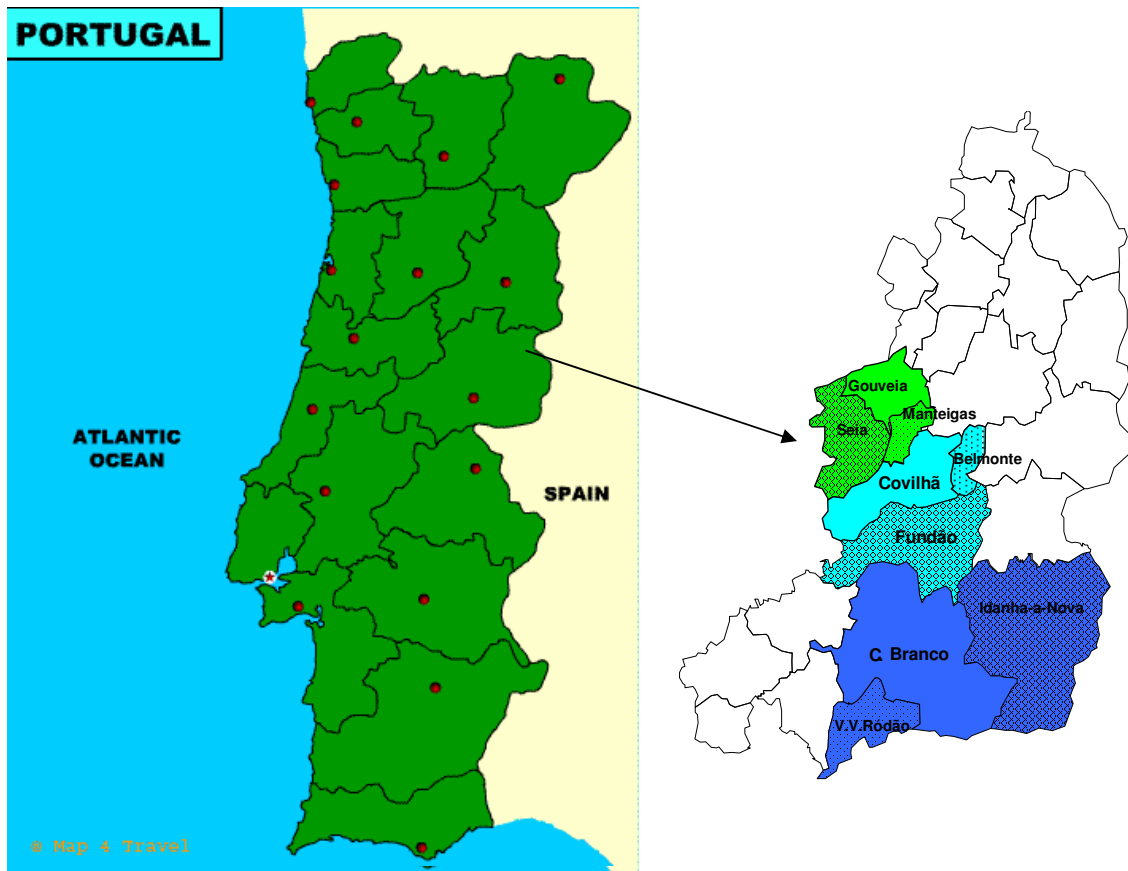
As we analysed a large amount of variables, at the different levels of the tourist offer⁵, we gathered a large number of information, which we intend to resume, in the context of this paper, presenting only the results of the application of the Factorial Analysis Method, namely the Principal Components Analyses. The Factorial Analysis of Principal Components, as a statistical multivariate method, allows transforming an initial set of correlated variables, into another set of variables not correlated, identified like principal components, which result from linear combinations of the initial set. For the effect, and after testing the application conditions for the above-mentioned method,

⁵ The functional and symbolic contents of lodging, restoration, transports, information system, tourist resources and attractions

the criteria of Keiser was used to select the number of components/dimensions to extract among the several variables that we found as motivating the tourists to come to our tourist destination. We will present the results after introducing the region in study.

5. THE GEOGRAPHICAL AREA OF THE STUDY

The choice of nine districts in study, located in Beira Interior region, had in consideration its location and its geographical alignment, as the next figure shows up and it was in this geographical context that we chose three districts in each one of the three different morphological zones: the districts of Seia, Gouveia and Manteigas in the mountain (Star Mountain), the districts of Belmonte, Covilhã and Fundão in a valley and the districts of Idanha-a-Nova, Castelo Branco and Vila Velha de Ródão in a plain (prairie).



The choice of these districts had in account their potential as tourist destination, on account the natural and cultural richness and diversity and also the possibility of a complementary offer.

Table 1 - Potentialities of the Sub-region to face the principal tourist motivations

↳ Landscape Diversity that the geographical contrasts provide
↳ Protected areas and of interest for the conservation of the nature, namely, the fauna and flora sorts existent in the Natural Park of the Star Mountain and in the Zone of the

International Tagus River

- ↳ The climate that, together with the existent infrastructures, makes this only region in the country where winter sports can be practiced
- ↳ The hydric resources that, besides the fish that they provide, allow the creation of river beaches and the practice of nautical sports
- ↳ The mountain range that allows the practice of radical sports, among others
- ↳ The traditions and cultural richness like the craftwork, the agricultural traditional activities, the festivities and cultural events, the gastronomy, among others
- ↳ The human resources and the hospitality that characterizes them, the old resident population and his knowledge of the history and of the legends of the places and of the traditional and cultural activities
- ↳ The existent historical and architectural inheritance (military, civil and religious)
- ↳ Thermal resources and of mineral water
- ↳ Unpolluted air
- ↳ Mountains
- ↳ Rural ambiance

Source: Vaz, 1996

6. WHO VISITED THE AREA. TOURISTS PROFILE.

The enquired individuals, almost the same men's number (50,23 %) and of women (49,77 %), had predominantly between 35 to 49 years of age (35 %), they were married (67 %) and travelling essentially with the spouse (35,9 %) and the majority (61 %) had high level of education, standing out the fact that around 28 % being teachers, which will be able to have contributed to the predominance (36 %) of the household monthly income between 1501 and 2992 €, so much more than of the individuals who said to have the teacher's profession, 68 % were Portuguese. When the profession of the spouse was cross-examined it was noticed that, also at this level, the teacher's profession was predominating.

Moreover, we obtained the following answers about their journey and stay:

- The Beira Interior region was the main destination (55%)
- They came for holidays (72,4%)
- The majority (64,5%) had already come to the region previously
- They stayed 3-4 days, on average
- The majority (77,4 %) used their own automobile to come and visit the region
- Almost totality (95 %) did not acquire any tourist package, preferring the flexibility of the individual arrangement/organization of his holidays
- Hotels (30,4 %) and camping (22,1 %) were the favourite types of accommodation
- 93 % of the enquired intend to visit the region again

7. EXPECTATION REGARDING THE HOLIDAY TIMES AND THE STAY

We wanted to know, through an open question, which the sensations and/or experiences they evaluate more in holidays and, in the sequence, to know which sensations and/or experiences marked their stay in the region.

Facing the obtained answers, we found important to analyse up to what point the experiences and/or sensations they lived in the region had correspondence with the

experiences and/or sensations that they affirmed to evaluate in the holiday time. For the effect, was built an indicator that intends to translate that correspondence and which we designated as “satisfaction indicator” (ϕ), once it considers the relative weight of the experience or sensation effectively lived, in the attributed evaluation.

For that, we adopt a methodology which, in the essential, consists as follow: it was divided the number of answers obtained in each one of the sensations and / or experiences lived in the region by the corresponding sensations and / or experiences evaluated in holidays and multiplying the quotients obtained by 100. So, for equal values to 100, the interpretation of the obtained coefficient will be that the valued item found full correspondence in the tried one during the stay in the region, whereas for values superior to 100, the sensation and / or experience lived or tried in the region surpassed the value that had been attributed to it. For values inferior to 100, the sensation or experience survived in the region was on under the value that had been attributed. The next table gives note of the obtained results, detaching the values that surpassed the expected.

Table 2 - Correspondence between the sensations / experiences most valued in holidays and tried during the stay in the region

Sensations and / or experiences	Evaluate in holidays (e) N° answers	Tried in the region (t) N° answers	Satisfaction Indicator $\Phi=(t/e)100$
Sun, hot, good weather	21	20	95,24
welcome, service, hospitality	7	19	271,43
friendship, family	19	18	94,74
environment, pure air, land, green	12	33	275,00
freedom, release	61	22	36,07
inheritance, culture, history	15	19	126,67
peace, calm, tranquillity	96	90	93,75
adventure, joy of living, open mind, curiosity	15	8	53,33
casualness, easiness, relaxation	39	86	220,51
contact with nature, natural beauty, landscapes	30	47	156,67
amusement, joy, pleasure, happiness	44	32	72,73
leisure, to sleep, do nothing	5	6	120,00
gastronomy, to eat well	12	19	158,33
local way of life, interaction with local population	12	7	58,33
silence, reading, introspection, reflection, observation	15	14	93,33
new experiences, novelty, difference, discovery	46	42	91,30
comfort, security	7	3	42,86
walks, sports, healthy life	10	7	70,00
to travel, to walk, to know, knowledge	58	20	34,48
water	12	4	33,33
space, escape, balance, change, routine break	10	5	50,00

8. A DEMAND-ORIENTED ASSESSMENT OF THE TOURIST DESTINATION. RESULTS FROM THE FACTORIAL ANALYSIS OF PRINCIPAL COMPONENTS

We questioned our sample about the degree of importance⁶ that they attributed to certain elements we considered inherent to any tourist destination, in order to know which of these elements had bigger relative weight in the assessment of a destination. After we analysed the set of the answers, one checked that though all the items suggested by us⁷ were considered important, the system of information on a tourist destination, the peculiarity of the experience survived in holidays and the resources and tourist attractions were, in this order, the elements that presented a greater average value of importance.

The introduction of the factorial analysis, namely of the method of Analysis of Principal Components, allowed us to identify the existence of two dimensions in the criteria of choice of a destination which correspond to the functional and symbolic contents referred by Gyimóthy (2000) in her model.

For the effect, after testing the conditions⁸ for the application of the above-mentioned method, the criterion of Keiser⁹ was used to select the number of components/dimensions to extract from between six variables that we found as common to any tourist destination. They were identified two components, what act around 57 % of the total variance, as we can see in the next table.

Table 3 - Total Explained Variance and Components Extracted according to the criterion of Keiser

Components	Initial own values	Relative Variance (%)	Relative Accumulated Variance (%)	Own values of extracted components	Relative Variance (%)	Relative Accumulated Variance (%)
1	2,071	34,520	34,520	2,071	34,520	34,520
2	1,355	22,584	57,105	1,355	22,584	57,105
3	0,801	13,349	70,454			
4	0,730	12,172	82,625			
5	0,608	10,132	92,758			
6	0,435	7,242	100,000			

The first component is undoubtedly the most important, acting around 35 % of the total variance. In the next table are presented the contributions¹⁰ of the variables for the retained components, representing such contributions the existent correlation between each original variable and each one of the factors, allowing interpreting its nature. For

⁶ It was used a Likert scale graduated from 1 to 5, to measure the degrees of importance attributed, in what 1 corresponds the not important at all and 5 the extremely important; 0 is corresponding to “ without opinion ”

⁷ Importance attributed to the accommodation, to the food/ restaurant, to the transports/accessibilities, to the information system (resources, attractions, ways of life, history ...), to the intensity/peculiarity of the experience survived in holidays /leisure and to the tourist resources/attractions.

⁸ The statistic KMO (Kaiser-Meyer-Ollin) obtained, 0,615, is superior to 0,5 and the level of the significance associated to the test of Bertlett is 0,000 and so, inferior to 0,05, which allows to reject the hypothesis of the correlations matrice to be the identity matrice; in other words, it reveals the existence of correlations between the variables.

⁹ Such a criterion demands that the components have own values equal or superior to the unity, representing the own values the quantity of variance contained or explained by each component

¹⁰ The contributions in the table are already the obtained ones after application of the VARIMAX rotation method.

the effect, there were considered as significant contributions those of value equal or superior to 0, 5.

Table 4 - The Functional and Symbolic Dimensions of a Tourist Destination

Functional Dimension	Contributions
Importance attributed to accommodation	0,832
Importance attributed to food/restaurants	0,791
Importance attributed to transports/accessibilities	0,600
Symbolical Dimension	Contributions
Importance attributed to the information system (resources, attractions, ways of life, history...)	0,795
Importance attributed to the intensity/peculiarity of the experience survived in holidays /leisure	0,760
Importance attributed to the tourist resources/attractions	0,630

One notes that these functional and symbolic aspects of the tourist destination are contained in the dimensions “Facilitation of the Stay”, “Mediation of the Services”, “Facilitation of the Movement” and “Mediation of the Destination”, from which, following Gyimóthy (2000), it is possible to assess the performance of a destination at the optics of its tourist demand.

In this context, applying the same method of analysis of the principals components to the variables that we classified like motivational variables which give form to those dimensions, it is possible to identify the principal components of each one of them, as well as the contribution of each variable for this dimension and the nature of its relations, allowing to know what dimensions and respective components are more important for the tourists who visited our tourist destination. The next tables summarize the obtained results of the factorial analysis of the principal components and contributions for those four above-mentioned dimensions.

Table 5 - Principal components and contributions to the role of “Facilitators of the Stay” of the tourist sub-region suppliers, in the Demand optics (in terms of importance)

ROLE	PRINCIPAL COMPONENTS	CONTRIBUTIONS	
	Quality and Amplitude of the Accommodation Services		
Facilitator	hygiene and security of the accommodations	,874	
	availability of the accommodations in resolving problems connected with the stay	,839	
	localization of the accommodations face to the tourist attractions and other services	,807	
	diversity and quality of the accommodations	,791	
	leisure equipments / activities of the accommodations	,782	
	complementary services of the accommodations (baby-sitters, restaurants, gymnasium...)	,703	
	knowledge of languages for part of the employees / owners of the accommodations	,660	
	assistance by the accommodations in the cares to childish and adult dependants	,594	
		Means of transport while temporary habitats. Quality demands	
	Services	hygiene and security of the means of transport	,902
availability for part of the transporters in resolving problems connected with the stay of tourists		,920	
knowledge of languages for part of the employees / owners of the transports		,876	
assistance by the transporters in the cares to childish and adult dependants		,779	
	Diversity, Quality, Availability, Location		
of the Stay	hygiene and security of the restaurants	,771	
	availability of the of tourist information officers to solve problems connected with the stay	,665	
	diversity / quality of the restaurants	,649	
	location of the restaurants face to the tourist attractions and other services	,608	
	availability for part of the restaurants in resolving problems connected with the stay	,593	

(Functional content)	Knowledge of languages as a way of making easy the stay	
	knowledge of languages for part of the tourist information officers	,856
	knowledge of languages for part of the employees / owners of the restaurants	,828
	knowledge of languages for part of the employees / owners of the accommodations	,602
	Assistance to childish and adult dependants	
	by the restaurants	,838
	by the accommodations	,657
	From the concrete to the virtual	Contributions
	Commercial areas / purchases	,810
	use of the Internet during the stay	,639

Table 6 - Principal components and contributions to the role of “Facilitators of the Movement” of the tourist sub-region suppliers, in the Demand optics (in terms of importance)

ROLE	PRINCIPAL COMPONENTS	CONTRIBUTIONS
	Mobility / interconnection of the means of transport	
Facilitator Services of the Movement (Functional content)	interconnection between several means of transport	,935
	diversity of the means of transport	,923
	interconnection of the transports with the tourist attractions	,912
	railroad connections	,905
	distance between this tourist destiny and the place of the usual residence	,843
	air connections with principal national airports	,823
	Information	
	diversity of supports of information	,858
	signalling of the localities	,832
	signalling of the resources and tourist attractions	,829
	posts of tourism and of tourist information	,790
	Co-ordination and Cooperation	
	interconnection of the accommodations w/other services (tourism offices, craftwork...)	,853
	interconnection of the accommodations with the means of transport	,841
	interconnection of the accommodations with tourist attractions	,812
	Security of the Physical Accessibilities	
	level of security of the inter district accessibilities	,828
	road signals	,820
inter-regional accessibilities /traffic	,806	
Location of the Destination. Public and private infrastructures/cooperation		
location of this destination relatively to the country / region of residence	,678	
interconnection of the restaurants with tourist attractions	,656	
interconnection of the restaurants with other services (tourism offices, craftwork...)	,645	
public zones and public equipments of leisure	,605	
planning and signing of the villages and of the places	,557	

Table 7 - Principal components and contributions to the role of “Mediator/Ambassadors of the Services” of the tourist sub-region suppliers, in the Demand optics (in terms of importance)

ROLE	PRINCIPAL COMPONENTS	CONTRIBUTIONS
	The Regional Identity of the Accommodations	
The Function of	cordiality in the service at the level of the accommodation	,889
	level of information about the region of the employees / owners of the accommodations	,840
	professionalism/professionals qualification of the employees/owners of the accommodations	,835
	level of prices of the accommodations	,789
	architecture of the accommodations fitted in the landscape	,781
	use of architectural elements of the region the accommodations	,778
	regional/personalized decorative elements of the accommodations	,765
	modern decorative elements of the accommodations	,663
	use of modern/cosmopolite architectural elements the accommodations	,595
	amusements in the accommodations	,567

Mediation of Services	Tourism Office: cordiality and degree of knowledge of the region	
	level of information on the region by the tourist information providers	,835
(Symbolic content)	existence of different types of information	,834
	time-tables of functioning of several services and of the tourist attractions	,757
Services	cordiality in the posts of tourism service	,754
	professionalism/professionals qualification of the tourist information providers	,744
	The Regional Identity of the Restaurants	
(Symbolic content)	architecture of the restaurants fitted in the landscape	,830
	use of architectural own elements of the region at the level of the restaurants	,828
	decorative regional / personalized elements in the restaurants	,794
	Portuguese gastronomy	,554
	The Transport service beyond the mobility	
(Symbolic content)	cordiality in the service at the level of the transports	,947
	level of information on the region for part of the employees / owners of the transports	,946
	professionalism / professionals qualification of the employees / owners of the transports	,945
		Modernity and Amusement
(Symbolic content)	modern decorative elements in the restaurants	,855
	use of modern architectural elements of the restaurants	,848
	modern decorative elements of the accommodations	,563
	use of modern/cosmopolitan architectural elements of the accommodations	,561
	amusement in the restaurants	,529
	The Service of Restoration beyond the food	
(Symbolic content)	the level of prices of the restaurants	,687
	the cordiality in the service at the level of the restaurants	,660
	the professionalism/professionals qualification of the employees/owners of the restaurants	,636

Table 8 - Principal components and contributions to the role of “Ambassadors of the Tourist Destination” of the tourist sub-region suppliers, in the Demand optics (in terms of importance)

ROLE	PRINCIPAL COMPONENTS	CONTRIBUTIONS	
Mediation of the Destination (Symbolic content)	Specificity of the Natural, Cultural and Human Resources		
	natural resources	,823	
	landscape diversity	,808	
	cultural inheritance	,795	
	contact with the nature	,774	
	traditional architecture	,766	
	conservation and evaluation of the inheritance (natural, cultural and built)	,714	
	the historical villages	,713	
	Monuments	,680	
	pure air	,649	
	climate of the region	,543	
	hospitality and receptivity of the residents	,522	
	peculiarity / typicalness of the region	,511	
		Adventure and Discovery. New Sensations and Experiences	
		Adventures	,797
		Discovery	,783
		different sensations of daily life	,622
		mountain environments	,620
		reserves, parks and natural protected areas	,556
		peculiarity of the experience acquired in holidays / leisure	,526
	rural environments	,500	
	Amusement. The Commonest Side of the Tourist Destination		
	night amusement (bars, discos ...)	,717	
	variety of activities/equipments	,707	
	fishing and hunter	,697	
	activities of sport (radical, nautical sports...)	,658	
	urbane culture	,615	
	destination considered very popular	,601	
	existence of friends / families in the region	,558	
	international gastronomy	,536	
	international craftwork in the region	,515	
	Cultural Specificities		
	stories and legends of the region	,753	
	historical events	,742	

personalities of the region (painters, politicians, writers, etc.)	,682
local craftwork	,567
contact w/the past	,535
Monuments	,506
Peculiarity and Knowledge	
peculiarity / typicalness of the region	,535
cultural knowledge / enrichment	,500
Walks in the Nature	
bicycle walks (cicloturism)	,725
pedestrians walks	,716
Specificities of the Human Resources	
Importance of the employees and / or owners of the accommodations to be of the region	,847
Importance of the employees and / or owners of the restaurants to be of the region	,645
Regional gastronomy	
authenticity of the regional gastronomy	,543
Local population in the Global Context	
Importance of the availability of the residents to give informations	,695
Importance of the international gastronomy	,575

Facing the obtained results, we can say that we got identic conclusions to those of Gyimóthy (2000) respecting the importance attributed to the different dimensions through which the demand assesses a tourist destination.

The method of factorial analysis used allowed us to detect the principal components of the facilitators' role of the tourist service providers, at the level of the movement and at the level of the stay, as well as of their mediators' role, both of the services, or the destination itself and of the region where this one is anchored. As Gyimóthy says, both the roles of facilitators and of mediators attributed to the tourist suppliers by the tourists contribute to enrich the experiences lived in holidays, be at the level of the satisfaction of normal and basic necessities, be at the level of superior needs which contribute to improve the experiences and the quality of life of the tourist.

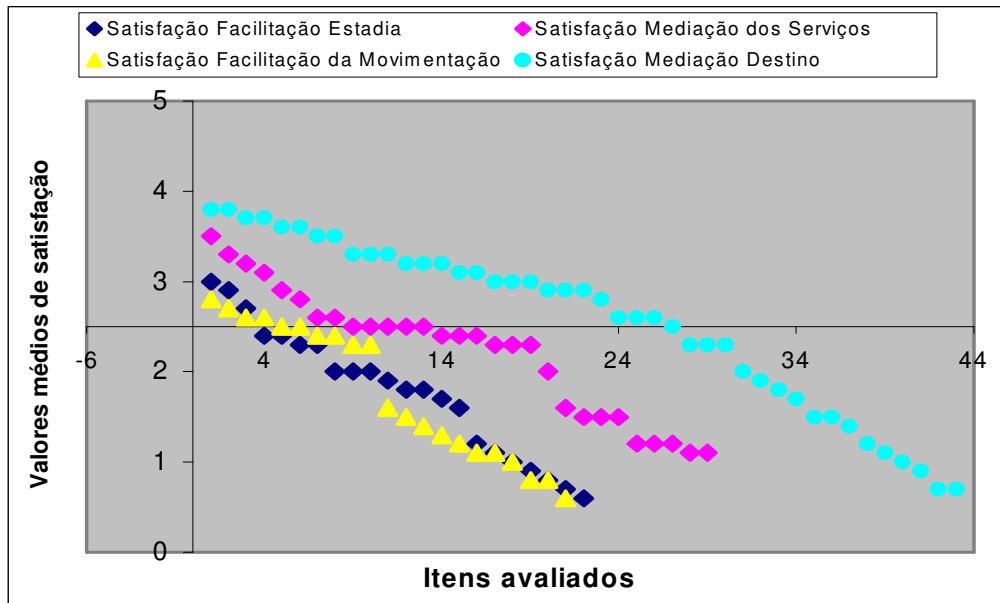
Table 9 - Principal components of the Dimensions of Evaluation of a Tourist Destination in Beira Interior region in the Optics of its Tourist Demand

Normal life		Better Life	
Functional Content	<p>Ways to facilitate the Movement</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Mobility / interconnection of the means of transport <input type="checkbox"/> Information <input type="checkbox"/> Co-ordination and Cooperation <input type="checkbox"/> Security of the Physical Accessibilities <input type="checkbox"/> Location of the Destination. Public and private infrastructures/cooperation 	Symbolic Content	<p>Tourist destination: Ambassador of the Region</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Specificity of Natural, Cultural and Human Resource <input type="checkbox"/> Adventure and Discovery. New Sensations and Experiences <input type="checkbox"/> Amusement. The Commonest Side of the Tourist Destiny <input type="checkbox"/> Cultural Specificities <input type="checkbox"/> Peculiarity and Knowledge <input type="checkbox"/> Walks in the Nature <input type="checkbox"/> Specificities of the Human Resources <input type="checkbox"/> Regional gastronomy <input type="checkbox"/> Local population in the Global Context
	<p>Ways to facilitate the Stay</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Quality and Amplitude of the Services of Accommodation <input type="checkbox"/> Means of transport while temporary habitats. Quality demands <input type="checkbox"/> Diversity, Quality, Availability, Location <input type="checkbox"/> Knowledge of languages making easy the stay <input type="checkbox"/> Assistance to dependants childish and adult <input type="checkbox"/> From the Concrete to Virtual: shopping and Internet 		<p>Tourist services: Ambassadors of the Services of the Region</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ <input type="checkbox"/> Regional identity of the Accommodations ▪ <input type="checkbox"/> Tourism officies: cordiality and level of knowledge of the region ▪ <input type="checkbox"/> Regional identity of the Restaurants ▪ <input type="checkbox"/> The Transport service beyond the mobility ▪ <input type="checkbox"/> Modernity and Amusement ▪ <input type="checkbox"/> The Service of Restoration beyond the food
Normal life		Better Life	

Having in count the importance attributed by the tourists to the functional and symbolic contents behind above-mentioned, we considered important to analyse the corresponding obtained levels of satisfaction, as a form of assess the tourist offer of the districts at study, in the perspective of his visitors. Did the search of the “difference” found echo in the tourist destination? And if so, how can this difference constitute a competitive advantage to the region where the destination is anchored? Is it possible to conciliate the objectives of sustainability, always present in our perspective of development, with competitive goals?

As a result of the aggregation of the answers obtained in the four dimensions of assessment, we concluded that it was essentially the symbolic aspects of Mediation / ambassador of the destination offer that satisfied more the tourist, since the functional contents obtained a lower average level of satisfaction. The next figure illustrates what we had just said, after had been calculated the average level of satisfaction associated to each one of the items and the different items grouped in accordance with four dimensions defined in the model of Gyimóthy (2000).

Figure 2 - Assessment of the sub-region as tourist destination in the optics of its tourist demand



9. CONCLUSIONS

The multiple roles required by the tourist from the tourist offer constitute a great challenge to the industry because besides responding to the multiple requisites demanded by the tourists, the tourist offer is also assessed in agreement with a great number of expectations, which can vary from visitor to visitor.

This means that the tourist offer needs identifying and ordering all these aspects in accordance with a scale defined by the demand, if it wants to properly satisfy the needs of those tourists who use such services. But being true for the offer of tourist services, will it be also true for the tourist destination as a whole? If a tourist destination wants to correspond to the expectations of whom visit it, must it order its priorities in function of its visitors?

We depart from the target concept of tourism destination as a tourist product and, in this sense, the territorial anchorage of this "product" only allows the "consumption" of it in the region of anchorage. This means that a tourist destination is more than a space that is visited and where one remains temporarily, once there are living together different communities with enterprises, organizations and institutions with different kinds of established nets of relations, objectives and aspirations that go beyond the one-dimensional and reducing perspective of satisfying primarily the needs of his visitors (as it is the case of the tourist enclaves).

The perspective of a tourist destination being considered bigger than the sum of the parts can have two readings. One of these centred in who enjoys the destination while visitor and the other targeted in who enjoys it while resident. While visitor, it is expected that the destination provides a set of better experiences and sensations different from the daily life; while resident one expects that the experience of the daily

life contributes to a better future. But now, in the current context of serious environmental and ecological imbalances, the future becomes risky for all. We mean that if the sustainable perspective of development will not be internalized, shared and operationalized by the visitors and by the residents and, at the level of these ones, by the public power and by all the communities, institutions and organizations, public and private, then any one of the both above mentioned readings of the tourist destination can be biased.

From the tourist we interviewed in our study, we detected the principal components that they considered important to the dimension “Tourist Destination: Ambassador of the Region”, as it was already referred. But notice that the specificities of the natural, cultural and human resources, the search of new sensations and experiences, the sensation of discovery, the search of the peculiarity as source of knowledge, the contact with the nature, are elements, among others, susceptible of being valued and preserving only in a perspective of sustainable development.

This perspective emphasizes the importance of the interconnection between the tourist development and the regional development and the necessity of the tourist destination to be positioned in terms of the model of development to follow and, consequently, in terms of the market as well.

We think that the development of the tourist destination based on the specificities of the region and assuming itself as a global offer of experiences as we behind described, will be able to contribute to its sustainability and to the sustainability of the region where it is territorially anchored. It will be in this context that a tourist destination can correspond to the expectations of its visitors and of its residents, since while ordering its priorities in function of its visitors, also does it simultaneously in function of its inhabitants, conciliating in this way the demand and the supply sides.

We conclude that through the increase in value of the specificities of its resources and assuming its offers as integrated experiences that takes into account the exceptional nature of the tourist consumption, the tourist destination manages to mark the difference satisfying the tourist needs without compromising (on the contrary, reinforcing) the satisfaction of the needs of local population, when both are pursuing the goal of the sustainability of the tourism and of the global process of development itself.

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