A STAGED AUTHENTICITY: WHAT MOTIVATES VISITORS OF A MEDIEVAL FAIRE?

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ABSTRACT

The search of the authenticity is an answer to the standardization of the world that results from the globalization. The quest for authenticity in a tourism destination leads with the measures' implementation of heritage conservation and stages thematic events around the most typical attribute of each place. These events are based on such attribute and may have impact on the development of a strong destination image.

Silves, located in the Algarve region at the south of Portugal, has a great heritage that comes from the Muslim period during the Medieval Era. This small city is, nowadays, one of the most attractive tourism destinations in the inland of a region whose most important tourist product is Sun and Beach.

This paper aims to analyze the experience of those who visited the Silves Medieval Faire during the summer of 2008, using a sample of Portuguese visitors that fulfilled a self-administrated questionnaire. Firstly, this study aims to profile visitors based on their socio-demographic characteristics and participation in this event using descriptive statistics. Secondly, it is intended to find out patterns of motivations beyond the choice of this kind of cultural event applying factor analyses. Thirdly, this study looks for understanding whether or not motivations differ among groups of visitors. This knowledge is fundamental to promote this type of events, allowing the most effective design of marketing strategies.

KEYWORDS

Cultural Event; Authenticity; Motivations; Visitants' profile.

INTRODUCTION

Due to the globalization of the economies and to the growth of competition to attract residents, tourists and investors' cities are looking for new ways of differentiation in order to improve their attractiveness.

No matter their dimension or their location, every day cities run to be more identical due to the adoption of standardized urban models. This leads with a lost of attractiveness for tourists and residents.

The authenticity's search is an answer to the standardization of the world that results from the globalization. Furthermore, tourists are interested in visiting destinations where the authenticity is a dominant characteristic. Currently, the older and more educated segments are the most receptive to such attribute, looking to increase knowledge about their personal roots (González, 2008).

The tourism industry, influenced by the 'consumption' culture, offers experiences and tries to promote the genuine authenticity of the destination. However, the offered degree of authenticity is extremely limited because the influences of the market and the consumption relations tend to remove the borders between what is really authentic and what it is not. The tourist promotion activities, the historical descriptions and the meaning of the places create the tradition and stimulate the nostalgia. Such authenticity is not genuine but, instead, is a 'staged authenticity'.

Silves, located in the Algarve region at the south of Portugal, has a great heritage that comes from the Islamic period during the Medieval Era. This small city is, nowadays, one of the most attractive tourism destinations in the inland of a region whose most important tourist product is Sun and Beach.

During August, Silves city stages a Medieval Faire that is inspired in the Islamic period. The aim of this event is to tell the story of a Moorish city that goes back to the X, XI and XII Centuries of its history during ten days. Residents dress the clothes and the medieval spirit, the shops sell Moorish and local products and there are Moorish performers and gastronomy on the streets. A significant number of national and international tourists who are lodged in the seaside goes to the beaches during the day but they visit the Silves Medieval Faire at night. The same thing happens among the residents in the Algarve region. Silves' residents are also present in the faire because they are the main performers.

This paper aims to analyze the experience of those who visited this event during the summer of 2008 using a sample of visitors that fulfilled a self-administrated questionnaire. Firstly, this study aims to profile visitors based on their socio-demographic characteristics and participation in this event using descriptive statistics. Secondly, it is intended to find out patterns of motivations beyond the choice of this kind of cultural event applying factor analyses. Thirdly, after some statistical tests, this study looks for understanding whether or not motivations differ among groups of visitors. This knowledge is fundamental in order to promote this type of event between two groups, allowing the most effective design of marketing strategies. The implications of the results in future marketing strategies are also discussed.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Culture has been one of the most important resources to cities which are trying to differentiate themselves in a global scenery (Herrero et al., 2006) in order to obtain competitive advantage (Griffiths, 2006; Smith, 2005). Cultural resources are faced as critical factors of success in the development of the 'creative city' (Landry, 2000) and the 'creative class'. Mainly, they have an important role in the urban policies when they are connected with cultural industries (Florida, 2002).

Cities became a stage where events take place with a great frequency. According to Harvey (1991, cit. in Richards and Wilson, 2004, p. 1932) this may lead to the creation of a 'festival city' converted in markets or 'theme parks' (Deffner and Labrianidis, 2005, p. 244). This is a business city (Hall and Hubbard, 1998) where marketing has a central role like growth of the competitiveness among cities to attract tourists, residents and investors.

Big events, in spite of their short length, have long term consequences to cities that host them (Roche, 1994). To Ritchie (1984, p. 2) we are talking about 'major one-time or recurring events of limited duration, developed primarily to enhance the awareness, appeal, and profitability of the host location'. According to Getz (1997, p. 6), 'due to the dimension and meaning of big events they attract great flows of tourists, media coverage, prestige and they impact the local economy of the tourism destination'. Nevertheless, 'the instrumentalization of culture has had the effect of marginalizing or displacing local cultural distinctiveness, weakening the connections between cultural production and consumption and damaging the long-term viability of cultural organizations' (Griffiths, 2006, p. 416).

Since XIX Century cities staged events to revitalize their economies, to build new infrastructures and to improve their images (Getz, 1991). Big events are usually good triggers to urban renovation which enhance the attractiveness of cities (García, 2004; Getz, 1991). Due to the events, cities have the opportunity to supply spectacular moments that add value to the brand and to the image of cities. Events are seen as the new constructors of place images (Hall, 1989, p. 21). They can be used as an interesting platform to reinforce the existing positioning of the city or, instead, to reposition it, to attract the attention of media, to create employment, to attract tourists and to improve feelings of belonging and pride among residents (Richards and Wilson, 2004; Deffner and Labrianidis, 2005; Roche, 1994; Bianchini, 1994).

In the global scenery, where competition is growing, the emotional persuasion is the key for success. The really important resource of the differentiating attributes of places exists in the domain of the symbolic and in the imaginary (Morgan et al., 2003).

The increasing importance of the symbolic sphere (Lash and Urry, 1994) alongside the experience economy (Pine and Gilmore, 1999) made that culture has become one of the main consumption's means of cities (Ritzer, 1999). The existence of a cultural capital in the urban places is a precondition to enhance the tourist demand (Richards, 1996; Zukin, 1995). Zukin (1995) considers that culture is an interesting euphemism to cities, and it appears as a creative force in the context of the search for unforgettable experiences. From this point of view, culture is embodied in all the dimensions of cities, from high culture (museums, theatres and concerts) to popular culture (pop music, fashion, etc.) and sports.

Richards (2000) and Richards and Raymond (2000) define 'creative tourism' as that carried out by those who seek tourism experiences that contribute to personal development. UNESCO (2006) defines creative tourism as 'travel directed towards an engaged and authentic experience, with participative learning in the arts, heritage, or special character of a place. It provides a connection with those who reside in this place and create this living culture'. So both definitions follow the same way. 'Creative tourism' emphasizes the authenticity of the travel experience and, at the same time, the participation of the tourist in events with local population with the purpose of learning about the character of a place and its living culture. 'Global world provides opportunities by which one can choose identity roots in different countries' (González, 2008, p. 807). The tourist wants to consume real experiences as well as authenticity (Boyle, 2004; Sedmak and Mihalic, 2008). In response to this tendency, cities have been engaged to renew urban and heritage strategies, performing events that can enhance their cultural profile. The new tourist, nowadays a more informed selective and exigent person, is looking for new places whose tourist product includes some of the cultural aspects that make it a different and interesting place to visit. To understand tourists motivations is crucial to the development of products that may fulfill their desires and, at the same time, to assure a competitive offer. Iso-Ahola (1980, p. 230) defines a motive 'as an internal factor that arouses, directs, and integrates a person's behaviour'. Individuals attend to an event with the desire 'to meet a need'. So 'motives

are the starting point that launches the decision process' (Crompton and Mckay, 1997, p. 425). Each individual may invoke different motives to explain his/her participation in the same event. In the same sense, this experience may feed attendees' motives with different benefits. Cohen (1979) advances with the argument that different people need different experiences, what has different meanings for each individual. From this point of view, each experience is able to satisfy 'a wide range of personal needs, from pleasure to the search of meanings' (Li, 2000, p. 865).

To Richards (2000) and to Richards and Raymond (2000) some segments of tourists, mainly those that can be considered in the 'creative tourism' domain, are searching to tourist experiences which may contribute to their personal enrichment. For example, the search for novelty and authenticity represents an interesting opportunity for places which may assume themselves as rich and unique in terms of culture.

Crompton (1979) identifies seven socio-psychological motivational domains to explain the motives for what people attend to events: novelty, socialization, prestige/status, rest and relaxation, education value/intellectual enrichment, enhancing kinship and relations/family togetherness and regression.

A special event like a festival implies that 'visitors are likely to be seeking cultural enrichment, education, novelty, and socialization' (Crompton and Mckay, 1997, p. 429). The main purpose of this study is to understand visitants' motivations, concerning the segment of Portuguese tourists which participate in Silves Medieval Fair adopting the framework developed by Crompton in 1979 and updated in 1997 as departure point.

SETTING

Introduced in a region whose central economic activity is coastal tourism, Algarve is the cradle of Portuguese tourism. The main motivation of travelling to Algarve is to seek Sun and Beach. However, new market opportunities were detected by looking at studies that focus on characterizing the tourist profile. Besides tourism entertainment, historical and cultural resources as well as architectural resources have revealed to be potentially attractive tourism elements, yielding the capacity to extend average stays and daily expenditures by tourists.

Silb, the name of the city of Silves during the Muslim occupation between XI and XIII Centuries, is one of the most tourist cities in the Algarve region. Located in the inland, Silves was an important city during the Muslim occupation. The heritage and the urban profile of the city are great testimonies of the Muslim culture and Silves constitutes a great attraction to the tourists who visit the Algarve.

The Medieval Fair in Silves is the most important event in the city. It is staged during August, the period with the biggest number of tourists who came to the Algarve mainly motivated by Sun and Beach. However, during their stays, tourists are looking also for cultural experiences and the Medieval Fair in Silves is an excellent opportunity to know an important period of the history of the city in order to understand better its present profile.

During ten days, residents, national and foreign tourists, have come to the streets where tradesmen from the region, from the Maghreb (most of them from Morocco) and from other countries sell handicraft and traditional products, actors perform small pieces of the city's history and musicians play traditional music.

METHODOLOGY

Questionnaire and data

A structured questionnaire, incorporating four sections, was conducted on Portuguese tourists attending to the Silves Medieval Faire during August 2008. Section I encompassed questions about socio-demographic characteristics. Section II included questions about the participation in the event. Section III looked to evaluate the expectations and perceptions about the event. Finally, section IV comprised a list of 21 motives that could have influenced the participation in the event. Motives were also assessed using a five-point Likert-type scale, with 1 = totally disagree to 5 = totally agree. Motives were selected based on Crompton's (1979, 1997) motivation scale. Ten pre-tests were carried out in order to check the validity of the questionnaire.

Portuguese tourists attending to the Medieval Faire represented the target population of the study. From this population, a sample was selected using a systematic sampling method. Questionnaires were distributed by undergraduate students and a total of 126 questionnaires were completed.

Data analysis procedures

A quantitative analysis, structured in three parts, has been conducted. The first part uses descriptive statistics of each variable in order to assess the attendees' profile by considering socio-demographic characteristics, participation in the event, expectations and perceptions about it. The second part applies exploratory factor analysis to the set of motivation items in order to reduce the data dimensionality. This analysis is complemented with statistical tests with the aim of identifying whether motivations are significantly different between visitors, considering the principal socio-demographic characteristics, participation in the event and perceptions. All analyses and tests were carried out using the software package SPSS, version 16.

RESULTS

Attendees' profile

Table 1 shows the main socio-demographic characteristics of the respondents. Most of them were female (55%) and were aged between 25 and 44 years (52.6%). The average age is 35 years old (standard deviation around 12 years old). In the most cases, attendees belonged to college or higher education (58.6%) and they were married (51.7%).

TABLE 1.
Demographic Characteristics of the Sample

Attendees' characteristics	Distribution of answers
Gender	Female: 55%; male: 45%
Age	15 – 24: 24.6%; 25 – 44: 52.6%; 45 – 64: 22.8%; mean = 34.5 years old; standard deviation = 11.96 years old
Educational qualification	Elementary: 6.9%; Secondary: 34.5%; College or higher: 58.6%
Marital status	Married: 51.7%; single: 41.4%; divorced: 6.9%

Besides the socio-demographic profile, respondents can also be described in terms of their participation forms in the Silves Medieval Faire. As Table 2 shows, visitors are used to come with someone else (96.8%), especially with the family (including kids) (53.4%) or friends (29.3%). In more than half of the cases, this is the first visit to such specific event (56.5%), even though 75.4% of attendees are used to come to other Medieval Faires. In addition, 41.9% of attendees said that they have participated in other similar events in the Algarve region. Other important information is related to the forms of knowledge about the Silves Medieval Faire. As it is indicated in Table 2, the outdoors and billboards in the Algarve or in the city, as well as the friends' recommendation, stand out as the most important forms of communicating the event. It is also relevant to observe that the Silves Medieval Faire has influenced the decision to book holidays of 22% of attendees.

TABLE 2.
Participation in the Event

Do you come with someone else?	Yes: 96.8%; No: 3.2%
Coming with …	Husband/wife: 17.2%; Husband/wife + kids: 53.4%; Friends: 29.3%
First participation in *Feira Medieval de Silves*?	Yes: 56.5%; No: 43.5%
Do you use to participate in other Medieval Fairs?	Yes: 75.4%; No: 24.6%
Have you ever participate in this kind of events in the Algarve?	Yes: 41.9%; No: 58.1%
Forms of knowledge about the *Feira Medieval de Silves*	Outdoors and billboards in the Algarve: quoted as very important by 45.6% of tourists; Friends Recommendation: 45.1%; Outdoors and billboards in the city: 43.1%; Tourist Guides: 32.7%; Publicity/News in magazines: 32%; Internet: 31.4%; Advertising in newspapers: 23.4%; By Chance: 11.6%
Feira Medieval de Silves influenced your decision to book holidays?	Yes: 22.0%; No: 88.0%

The expectations about the event were clearly exceeded, which are shown in Table 3. Moreover, this table summarizes several indicators which evidence that visitants feel a high level of satisfaction with the event: more than 75% of attendees declared to be satisfied or very satisfied with the Medieval Faire; around 90% said that intend to repeat the visit and almost everyone intended to recommend the Faire to friends or relatives (98%). In terms of specific attributes of the event, these strongly quoted as satisfactory or very satisfactory were those related to animation, cleanliness, cultural programme, promotion and residents' welcoming.

TABLE 3.
Expectations and Perceptions about the Event

Expectations about Feira Medieval de Silves	Far: 5.1%; According to: 27.1%; Exceeded: 49.2%; Exceeded a lot: 18.6%
Overall Satisfaction with the event	Unsatisfied: 3.3%; Nor Unsatisfied nor Satisfied: 18.3%; Satisfied: 33.3%; Very Satisfied: 45%
Attribute satisfaction	Heritage: quoted as "satisfied or very satisfied" by 93.1%; Entertainment / animation: 78,9%; Cleanliness: 77.2%; Figurants (actors): 75.0%; Promotion: 74.6%; Merchandising: 74.1%; Residents' welcoming: 73.7%; Residents' involvement: 67.9%; Organization of the event: 67.8%; Availability to help: 66.1%; Accessibilities: 62.5%;Information: 61%; Reception/welcoming: 60.3%; Authenticity: 60%; Lodging: 54.7%; Urban Planning: 52.7%; Restaurants: 49.1%; Signing in the city: 43.9%; Local authorities / Security: 41.8; Shopping areas: 27.6%; Parking: 7%.
Intention to come back	Yes: 88.3%; Maybe: 11.7%; No: 0%
Intention to recommend	Yes: 98.3%; Maybe: 1.7%; No: 0%
Intention to visit…	The castle: quoted by 91.5% of tourists; the Archeology Museum: 61%; the Cathedral: 57.6%; the streets: 52.5%; Fábrica do Inglês: 50.8%; other churches and chapels: 49.2%; restaurants and bars: 47.5%; shopping areas: 44.1%; the river: 33.9%; the market: 30.5%; another: 6.8%

Motivations

Once applied to the 21 items used to measure motivations to visit the Medieval Faire, factor analysis identifies five factors that together account for 68.6% of the total variance (KMO = 0.81; Bartlett test: *p-value* = 0.00). These results are presented in Table 4. By observing the items with higher loadings in each factor, the factors were labelled as socialisation, novelty, intellectual enrichment, rest and relaxation and city identity. Cronbach's alpha coefficients exceed 0.6 in the five cases, meaning that all factors report a moderated or high internal consistency. Table 4 also shows that attendees feel strongly motivated in terms of all items since the mode, in all cases, is 5 'strongly agree'. However, factors can be sorted in what respect to the mean score. In this analysis, novelty stands out as the most important motivation followed by city identity, intellectual enrichment, rest and relaxation and, finally, socialization.

TABLE 4.

Motivation Items and Factors from EFA

Items and factors	Loading	Mode (*)	Mean	Standard deviation
Socialization			3.69	0.959
(Alpha = 0.87; explained variance = 19%)				
I_1 – I like to participate in meetings with a group of people	0.878	5	3.89	1.107
I_2 – I enjoy making new friends here	0.778	5	3.41	1.318
I_3 – I come here so I can be with my friends	0.773	3	3.30	1.306
I_4 – It is more fun to come here with others than alone	0.742	5	4.25	0.919
I_5 – By going to these events, I have a chance to meet people who are enjoy the same things I do	0.645	5	3.61	1.246
Novelty			4.44	0.848
(Alpha = 0.87; explained variance = 14.8%)				
I_6 – My ideal Medieval Fair includes looking at things I have never seen before	0.753	5	4.43	0.981
I_7 – I wish to see new things while I am here	0.698	5	4.50	0.770
I_8 – I like to be surprised during these kind of events	0.658	5	4.33	0.816
I_9 – I like to visit this kind of sites	0.649	5	4.53	0.812
I_{10} – I like to explore new things here	0.624	5	4.45	0.832
I_{11} – To discover new things here is a precious experience for myself	0.559	5	4.38	0.865
Intellectual enrichment			4.09	1.039
(Alpha = 0.60; explained variance = 12.6%)				
I_{12} – I come to this type of event to increase my understanding of Muslim culture	0.748	5	3.88	1.201
I_{13} – I come to these kind of events to learn more about local history	0.746	5	4.33	0.925
I_{14} – I come to this event to increase my knowledge of local culture	0.648	5	3.67	1.161
I_{15} – I like to experience new customs and cultures	0.537	5	4.50	0.822
Rest and relaxation			3.89	0.738
(Alpha = 0.59; explained variance = 12.3%)				
I_{16} – I like to be relaxed in order to participate in this kind of event	0.679	5	3.95	1.111
I_{17} – I like to participate in this kind of events that are not easy for me to go to	0.647	5	4.37	0.938
I_{18} – I like to participate in these kind of events to change the routine life style	0.626	5	4.22	0.922
City authenticity			4.190	1.030
(Alpha = 0.75; explained variance = 9.9%)				
I_{19} – This kind of event is attached with the sense of this place	0.818	5	4.38	0.875
I_{20} – The atmosphere of this event is attached with my image of this city	0.775	5	3.84	1.225
I_{21} – I think that Silves needs more events like this to allows us to understand the cultural background of the city	0.598	5	4.34	0.965

(*) Legend: 3 = neutral; 4 = strongly agree

Next, *independent-samples t tests* and *ANOVA tests* were carried out in order to identify whether motivations differ among attendees' groups in terms of several independent variables. The results of these analyses indicate that socialisation, novelty and rest and relaxation are more important to women than to men (*independent-samples t tests*: *p-values* < 0.05). On the other hand, the factor intellectual enrichment is strongly assessed by the attendees with a higher education. Socialization is highly scored by the younger attendees, i.e., those aged lower than 24 years old (*ANOVA tests*: *p-values* < 0.03). No significant relationship was detected between the marital status or the frequency of participation in the event (first visit versus repeated visit) and the motivation factors. Other important finding is that the intellectual enrichment is more important to those attendees who are used to participate in this type of events, whereas rest and relaxation is less important to this group of visitors (*independent-samples t tests*: *p-values* < 0.03). Finally, all motivation factors are strongly assessed by attendees who intend to repeat a visit to the event, although significant differences only come out in terms of intellectual enrichment and rest and relaxation (*independent-samples t tests*: *p-values* < 0.05).

CONCLUSION

Tourism is essentially a quest for authenticity (MacCannell, 1973). Although motivated by a Sun and Beach product, tourists who visit the Algarve also seek for intellectual enrichment and authenticity in their trips. As Kim and Jamal noted, the 'concept of authenticity has played a prominent role in understanding tourist motivation and experience' (Kim and Jamal 2007, p. 182). Nevertheless, it 'appears to remain an ill-defined and puzzling concept' (Jamal and Hill 2004, p. 354). In recent studies, experts have explored the idea that 'authenticity is no longer seen as a quality of the object but as a cultural value constantly created and reinvented in social processes' (Olsen 2002, p. 163). This thesis explains why city managers perform events that, when applied as cultural ones, are considered authentic, even when they are staged as a theatrical performance. Events and festivals are instruments to make a tourist experience an authentic experience.

If the traditional vision of cultural tourism was deeply related to a more elitist cultural product, nowadays popular culture is also presented as an important tourist attraction (Richards, 1994). This is used as an important resource of differentiation and added value, mostly in mature tourism destinations which are deeply concentrated on the Sun and Beach product. The results of this study clearly show that the cultural experience can be presented as an element of added value to the tourist offer of the Algarve region. Actually, in general terms, most of the Medieval Faires attributes produced a feeling of satisfaction to more than 75% of attendees. The success of this product may also be attested by the fact that almost 70% of the respondents pointed that their initial expectations were exceeded and around 45% considered themselves very satisfied with this experience. Other revealing results are those related to the event's 'loyalty', since 88% of the respondents have a clear intention to come back in the future and nearby 100% intend to recommend it to friends or relatives.

In terms of the motivations, this study shows that attendees are strongly motivated by five groups of factors: socialisation, novelty, intellectual enrichment, rest and relaxation and city identity. The searches for novelty, to know about the authentic roots of the city and to contribute with this event to the intellectual enrichment are the most important ones. As this study also evidences, the factors are perceived differently by attendees, considering some socio-demographic variables, the type of participation in the event and the perceptions about it. These findings are not substantially different than those reported in other studies that have tried to understand the profile and motivations of festival attendees. However, the *search for novelty* and the fact that this event shows the *city identity* seems to be the most relevant motivations to the Portuguese tourists attending this Medieval Fair. For them it is relevant to understand the cultural background of this city which represents an important sign the city planners.

To make sure that this event will be sustainable in a long term perspective, the city planners have to manage the balance between the needed innovations that are required to this kind of

products with the consistency that derives from the city's identity, already translated into its positioning strategy.

Overall, these findings can be used by the management team to plan better and market the event, to monitor satisfaction, to understand the visitors' decision processes, to identify strengths and opportunities to visitors' satisfaction, to introduce improvements in order to increase revenues and to improve the product's development (Guzman et al., 2006). They also help to design better the promotion strategy of the event and to decide about the claim of the advertising message.

Specifically, this study shows that the offer of cultural products in Sun and Beach tourism destinations like Algarve, is a beneficial way to differentiate the destination and to provide added value to the core product. Located in a mature tourism destination which is mostly concentrated in Sun and Beach products, Silves has a great potential of attractiveness considering that tourists of nowadays want to enhance their cultural background through experiences which allow them to increase knowledge about the local culture (Valle et al., 2008).

Culture represents one of the most important elements to add value to places. WTO expects that cultural tourism will grow in a sustainable way during XXI Century as it is one of the main motivations of tourist (WTO, 2000). The great amount of cultural attractions and the extension of culture definition and cultural tourism justify the inclusion of different cultural products in the cultural offer. This cultural offer attracts different segments of visitors with different motivations. This scenery should motivate 'distinct management approaches' (Laws, 2001, p. 84) from the responsible for the management of tourism destinations in order to fulfil the demand motivations.

One limitation of this study is the dimension of the sample. However, we consider that this kind of research, assumed as having exploratory aims, is important because it allows to the research team and to the professionals to have a deeper understanding about their publics profile. It permit us to discuss how creativity should be faced (and performed) in tourism destinations in order to project a consistent image of the place but, at the same time, to innovate in order to fulfill the search for novelty motivation.

In terms of future investigation concerning this theme it would be interesting to repeat this study within foreign tourists. It would be also interesting to understand how the residents experience the Medieval Faire at Silves as they are, at the same time, performers and attendees.

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