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Residents' Perceptions about Tourism Development: A Comparative Analysis of Selected Locations in the North of Portugal

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Abstract: Residents' perceptions of tourism's impacts (either negative or positive) are of utmost importance as, ultimately, they will influence their support for the industry. This paper aims to present the results of a study focusing on tourism development and its impacts based on residents' perceptions and how tourism affects their lives and places of living, applied to specified areas within the northern region of Portugal. A comparative analysis of the historic centre of Porto, the historical centre of Guimarães, and two parishes of the Peneda-Gerês National Park is presented. Tourism is a relevant economic activity with significant volume despite the perceived range of intensity levels and related impacts. Notwithstanding the acknowledged benefits, these areas are associated, to some extent, with tourism pressures, potentially generated among the historic centre of Porto, the historical centre of Guimarães, and two parishes of the Peneda-Gerês National Park. These regions presented negative impacts that provoke antagonistic feelings from residents. Thus, a questionnaire-based survey was conducted among people living in these areas. The results reveal that residents generally recognise the benefits of tourism, despite some concerns about its negative impacts on the local culture and infrastructure, particularly the overcrowding effect in smaller historic town centres and natural areas.

Keywords: North Portugal; residents' perceptions; social impacts; sustainable tourism

1 Introduction

Tourism is among the most significant and fastest-growing economic sectors (OECDiLibrary, 2020). Over the last few years, it has established itself as an instrument of development and promotion of the economy and society. However, it faces significant challenges regarding sustainability (Mihalic, 2016).

Sustainability within the tourism industry has been gaining increased attention (e.g., Bruyn et al., 2023; Marques & Oliveira, 2023). However, the prevailing perspective has been associated with environmental aspects. Considering all the dimensions it encompasses, particularly the social view and its many impacts on populations, the need for a holistic, integrated approach has become critical (Silva et al., 2022; Vu et al., 2023). One of the main challenges is ensuring that tourism development is within the acceptable carrying capacity of destinations, both from an environmental and a social perspective. Regional and territorial specificities require planning and managing strategies, ensuring that all relevant stakeholders are involved in working together. Sustainable tourism is much more than a specific type of tourism; it is a mindset, an aspiration that all forms of tourism should strive for acceptable levels of growth with respect for the local environment and cultures (Global Sustainable Tourism Council, 2018; OECDiLibrary, 2020).

Monitoring tourism activity is a necessary, although challenging, process to ensure ongoing and constant measurement of impacts. This monitoring helps to capitalise on opportunities and respond to challenges as they arise (OECDiLibrary, 2020; United Nations Environment Programme & World Trade Organization, 2005). It is imperative to involve all stakeholders in the monitoring process. By involving all stakeholders, we can ensure that the monitoring process is comprehensive and representative of the interests of those affected by tourism.

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This paper focuses on the sustainable development of tourism and its impacts based on residents' perceptions and how tourism affects their lives and places of living, applied to specified areas within the northern region of Portugal, such as the historic centre of Porto, the historic centre of Guimarães, and the two parishes of Peneda-Gerês National Park. Although they are all considered relevant tourist locations, their potential and performance are somewhat different, geared towards divergent types of tourism, given their intrinsic differences. Two are deemed important historic cities, where cultural attractions prevail, and one is a national park, where natural values and resources are prominent. However, tourism is a relevant economic activity with significant demand volumes, albeit with different perceived intensity levels. These areas are associated, to some extent, with tourism pressures, potentially generating negative impacts and antagonistic feelings between tourists and residents.

Quantitative data was collected through a survey based on questionnaires filled out by a sample of the resident population in each selected area under study.

2 Literature Review

2.1 Sustainable Tourism

Travelling while minimising negative impacts on destinations and positively affecting the lives of local populations and their surroundings has become a paramount concern (Marques & Oliveira, 2023). Embracing sustainability has become an inevitable and increasingly recognised path for all stakeholders in the global tourism sector (Turismo de Portugal, 2023).

Although there are different definitions of sustainable tourism, the definition by the United Nations Environmental Program (UNEP) and the United Nations World Tourism Organization (WTO) is widely accepted by scholars (Vu et al., 2023). These organisations defined sustainable tourism as “tourism that takes full account of its current and future economic, social, and environmental impacts, addressing the needs of visitors, the industry, the environment, and host communities” (United Nations Environment Programme & World Trade Organization, 2005, p. 12). This definition underscores the economic, social, and environmental dimensions as fundamental pillars of sustainable tourism development.

A tourist destination represents a dynamic and multifaceted environment where a vast and complex set of

activities, with various interdependent stakeholders, provide the tourism experience (Carvalho, 2020). Sustainable tourism development faces challenges in practical implementation, leading to increasing attention to the notion of responsible tourism (Mihalic, 2016). The sustainability of tourism is the consequence, therefore, of the responsibility of all segments involved. However, the crucial leadership role of government officials in this process is evident and necessary (United Nations Environment Programme & World Trade Organization, 2005).

As societal awareness of the environment and the need for sustainability increases, sustainable tourism assumes greater importance. Talking about sustainability, however, has become a trend. Currently, the term is often used as a marketing tool and for commercial exploitation, even though, sometimes, nothing is being done in that direction, a phenomenon known as ‘Greenwashing’. It’s essential to fight it because the efforts of responsible companies are then neglected due to a loss of trust on the part of consumers, which puts the entire sustainable tourism industry at risk. Stakeholder engagement and ongoing impact monitoring are crucial for sustainable development in tourist destinations.

2.2 Impacts and Residents' Perception of Tourism

Over the years, tourism has emerged as an economic and social development tool. It facilitates increased employment opportunities, attracts capital investments for new businesses, and fosters the growth of small and medium-sized enterprises, among other advantages (World Tourism Organization, 1998). Tourism enhances the quality of life for communities and promotes local development.

Despite its positive contributions, tourism also poses potential threats to the well-being of communities and the environment. The rampant growth of mass tourism, driven by globalisation and unchecked exploitation of capacity (often disregarding carrying capacity), has resulted in adverse effects in various regions. Many destinations, such as Amsterdam, Barcelona, Dubrovnik, and Venice, experienced the detrimental effects of overtourism, leading to complaints and dissatisfaction among residents (Alexis, 2017; Cassinger, 2019; Marques, 2021). Consequently, residents' sense of place and cultural identity has eroded, leading to anti-tourism campaigns (Hempen, 2020; Hughes, 2018; Novy & Colomb, 2016).

Issues associated with mass tourism have amplified tension between residents and tourists. Conflicts arise as destinations attract increasing numbers of tourists

(Engberg et al., 2022). Striking a balance between the needs and expectations of residents and the interests of tourists becomes a complex challenge that requires inclusive stakeholder participation and continual monitoring of tourism's impacts.

Over the last few years, several studies have reported significant variations regarding residents' attitudes towards tourism development within communities, as various factors can influence their attitudes (Gursoy et al., 2019; Sharpley, 2014). These include socioeconomic factors, economic dependency on tourism, and spatial factors.

Socioeconomic factors, such as job opportunities, influence residents' perceptions and attitudes (Gursoy et al., 2019). Several studies (e.g., Ambrož, 2008; Nunkoo & Ramkissoon, 2010; Snaith & Haley, 1999) have observed that residents who were economically tied to the tourism industry showed a higher level of support for tourism development than residents who are financially independent of tourism. On the other hand, some residents may perceive the higher property taxes and repair costs associated with tourism development as negating potential economic benefits (Harrill & Potts, 2003).

Overall, perceived positive tourism impacts, such as the quality of leisure structures and improvements in the quality of built heritage and natural environment, positively influence residents' perceptions of tourism development (Ambrož, 2008; Harrill & Potts, 2003). The positive perceptions, however, are negatively associated with the length of residency, as long-term residents are generally less favourable to tourism development (Ambrož, 2008; Gu & Ryan, 2008).

Different environments are related with varied perspectives and attitudes towards tourism development, as is the case of historic districts (e.g., Harrill & Potts, 2003) and city centres (Snaith & Haley, 1999), resort towns (Korça, 1998), small islands (Nunkoo & Ramkissoon, 2010), rural areas (Kosmaczewska et al., 2016), or natural areas (Gogitidze et al., 2022; Muresan et al., 2021).

The environmental and geological vulnerabilities of natural areas (especially protected sites) have also resulted in a significant proportion of sustainable management programs focusing on ecological dimensions and criteria, neglecting the social dimensions of development (e.g., community involvement and feelings toward tourism), which require an equal focus. Due to their nature, natural and mountainous areas (protected or not) represent unique tourism contexts, enhanced by the demand for more ecological and nature-based tourism solutions and requiring strategies in terms of making political and economic decisions (Gogitidze et al., 2022; Muresan et al., 2021).

2.3 Monitoring of Tourist Activities and Their Impacts

The involvement of all stakeholders and continuous monitoring of impacts is indispensable to ensuring a harmonious and sustainable coexistence between tourism and local communities (Brito, 2012). To meet the challenges of sustainable tourism, a holistic approach to monitoring must be adopted, and indicators must encompass environmental, economic, and social aspects. Brito (2012) asserts that the indicators used for monitoring can help communities, industries, and countries define their sustainability objectives, establish their concept of sustainability, assess the progress made, and identify priority areas for intervention. Although complicated or demanding to implement due to the process of indicators selection, data collection and measurement, monitoring processes are fundamental tools for decision-makers to reduce the chances of making wrong decisions.

Developed by the European Commission and targeted at achieving sustainable tourism development goals outlined in the agenda for sustainable and competitive European tourism, the European Tourism Indicators System (ETIS) is a crucial self-assessment tool that helps tourism destinations monitor their sustainability performance (European Commission, n. d). Furthermore, ETIS is a flexible system that can be adapted to the needs of each destination (European Commission, 2013). It includes twenty-seven core indicators and 40 supplementary indicators grouped into four categories: destination management, environmental impact, economic value, and social and cultural impacts. The indicators can be used individually, in combination, or integrated into existing destination monitoring systems, offering adaptability to suit each destination's specific needs (EUR-Lex, 2007).

Turismo de Portugal, the national Portuguese tourism authority, has demonstrated its commitment to sustainability through several initiatives, including the Tourism Strategy 2027, the 'Tourism + Sustainable 2020/2023' plan, and the 'Reactivate Tourism | Build the Future' plan. Tourism Strategy 2027 is a strategic framework for Portugal's next ten years of tourism, with sustainability explicitly highlighted as a guiding principle. The strategy sets ambitious objectives and targets to achieve across three dimensions of sustainability and a set of sustainability monitoring indicators — Sustainable Tourism Indicators System (SITS) — oriented towards facilitating and supporting the decision-making process by enabling managers' and other stakeholders' access to updated and relevant data about the performance of tourism destinations. SITS is supported by a business intelligence

platform, available freely on Travel BI, Turismo de Portugal's knowledge management website (Guerreiro & Seguro, 2018).

Moreover, as part of Tourism Strategy 2027, sustainability observatories have been established to gain in-depth knowledge of the industry's impacts on the territory and to enhance planning and destination management efficiency. The most recent addition to these observatories is the Sustainable Tourism Observatory of the Porto and Northern Portugal Region, created in 2022 to monitor the supply and demand of this destination (TravelBI, 2023a).

The choice of relevant indicators is oriented to ensure their feasibility and comparability, and the choice has envisioned, as far as possible, to select indicators using secondary data from recognised sources, often referred to as big data (Pardo et al., 2021). ITC and big data enable the prospective analysis of complex systems and the anticipation of complex relationships between the environment's carrying capacity and infrastructures, tourism, and the economic growth of a region (Pardo et al., 2021). Although residents' satisfaction with tourism is a highly relevant indicator among the established priorities for Turismo de Portugal (Guerreiro & Seguro, 2018), data is rarely available. This survey aims to address this information gap through primary data collection based on a questionnaire from residents in three locations in north Portugal.

2.4 The North Region

The northern region of Portugal, the third largest region in the country, comprises eight sub-regions or NUTS III level units (Figure 1): Porto Metropolitan Area, Alto Minho, Ave, Cávado, Douro, Tâmega e Sousa, Alto Tâmega, and Terras de Trás-os-Montes. It comprises 86 municipalities and 1,426 parishes (Comissão de Coordenação e Desenvolvimento Regional do Norte, n. d.).

Approximately 35% of the Portuguese population resides in the north (Comissão de Coordenação e Desenvolvimento Regional do Norte, n. d.). According to Census 2021, the area with the most inhabitants is the Porto Metropolitan Area, with a 1,736,228 resident population, while the territory with the lowest resident population is Alto Tâmega, with 84,248. The northern region has been experiencing a population decline; in 2021, the resident population was 3,586,586 (PORDATA, 2023).

The northern region of Portugal holds significant potential for tourism growth, with a growing number of visitors. In 2022, the tourism sector in Portugal approached the values of 2019 in terms of overnight stays (-0.7%) and guests (-2.3%), having surpassed the values in tourism

revenues (+16.7%), while the northern region exceeded: overnight stays (6.9%), guests (2.9%) and tourism revenues (19.6%). Spain, France, the United States, Brazil, and Germany were the main issuing markets for the northern region (TravelBI, 2023b).

In 2022, Portugal received 26.5 million guests, of which 15.3 million were foreign, and registered 69.7 million overnight stays (46.8 million by foreigners and 22.9 million by nationals). The northern region received 6 million guests, of which 3 million were foreigners, and registered 11.6 million overnight stays (6.8 million by foreigners and 4.8 million by nationals) (TravelBI, 2023b).

This region has various tourist attractions, some distinguished by UNESCO as World Heritage Sites: the historic centre of Porto, the rock engravings of Foz Côa representing the world's most extensive collection of prehistoric engravings, the historic centre of Guimarães and the Alto Douro Wine Region, as a 'living cultural landscape', where one of the most striking wines in human history was born: Port wine. The region has many endogenous resources as strategic differentiation factors, with a national and international dimension (Comissão de Coordenação e Desenvolvimento Regional do Norte, 2008). Moreover, the area has representative traditions, such as handicrafts, festivals, pilgrimages, and local products.

3 Methods

3.1 Study Areas

The three areas under study (marked as a, b, and c below and in the map above) are amongst the most visited places in the northern region:

(a) **The historical city centre of Porto**, Portugal's second-largest city, located on the coast and stretching along the right bank of the Douro River, referred to as the capital of the north. The city has a diverse and solid transport network, including air, road, rail, and cruise, hosting the country's second main airport and facilitating the arrival of tourists (Área Metropolitana do Porto, n. d.). It offers numerous historical, cultural and recreational opportunities. It became known worldwide mainly for its port wine cellars. The historical centre has been classified as a Cultural World Heritage Site by UNESCO since 1996 (Silva et al., 2022).

Over the last several years (before the COVID-19 pandemic and again after 2022), tourism in Porto has been so intense that it has been referred to as 'overtourism', and is

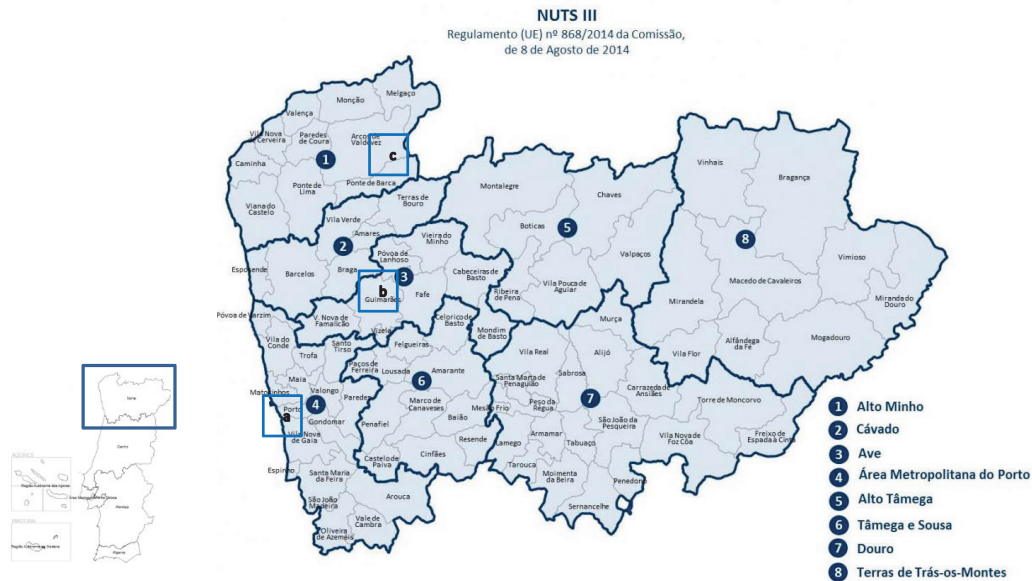


Figure 1: Map of the northern region of Portugal.

Source: Comissão de Coordenação e Desenvolvimento Regional do Norte (n. d.).

associated with short-stay rentals of private houses (alojamento local), causing more pressure on the historical city centre (Costa et al., 2019; Pinheiro, 2019), starting to disturb on residents' living conditions (Veríssimo et al., 2020).

(b) **Guimarães**, a city of medieval origin, which has its roots in the late 10th century and is associated with the birth of Portugal as a nation. Porto and Guimarães, in addition to relevant historical centres and vast cultural and architectural heritage (despite the different scales), also share the characteristic of having their historical centres classified as World Heritage Sites by UNESCO;

(c) **Soajo e Gavieira (PNPG)**, two parishes in the municipality of Arcos de Valdevez, in the heart of the Peneda-Gerês National Park, known as some of the most typical and picturesque villages in the region, located on one of the slopes of the Soajo mountain range. Its attractiveness is to the result of being part of the protected territory of the PNPG and of the richness of its natural resources. It is also due to the harmonious built ensemble, well integrated with the surrounding natural space, testimonies of the occupation, and ancestral ways of life.

3.2 Research Design

This research has adopted a quantitative approach using a survey administered through a questionnaire, which was developed on the basis of a thorough literature review (e.g., Borges et al., 2020; Gomes, 2020; Souza, 2009;

Sousa, 2019; Vareiro et al., 2013) of reports using similar approaches, from which questions were drawn or adapted.

The target population was residents from the locations mentioned above, more precisely in the six parishes of the historic centre of Porto (União das freguesias de Sé, Vitória, Cedofeita, Santo Ildefonso, Miragaia, São Nicolau), which according to the 2021 census has 37430 inhabitants; in the united parishes of Oliveira, S. Paio e S. Sebastião of Guimarães (these areas having a more significant number of visitors and potentially higher pressure) with a total of 7830 inhabitants; and in the entire territory of the two parishes of the PNPG, Soajo and Gavieira, where the population is more widely dispersed and with 670 and 258 inhabitants, respectively (INE, 2023). Weighing overnights against residents and KM2 (Tourism Intensity and Tourism Density) (Table 1) in the research areas, we notice that Porto presents much higher results, anticipating tourist pressure and potential antagonistic sentiments from residents (Silva et al., 2022).

3.3 Sampling Procedures and Data Collection

The study employed a nonprobabilistic, convenience sampling approach. However, concerns and efforts were addressed to meet the strata of the local population profile (e.g., age, gender, students, and workers) (Veal, 2018). In total, 757 valid questionnaires were collected (Table 2) and fit for analysis, distributed as follows:

Table 1: Tourism Social Sustainability Indicators

	Overnights 2022*	Residents (2021 Census)	Tourist Intensity (overnights/100 residents/day), in 2022*	Tourist Density (overnights/Km2/ day), in 2021*
Norte	11 556 645	3 586 586	0.08	0.79
Arcos de Valdevez	80 263	20 718	0.09	0.39
Guimarães	320 866	156 830	0.05	2.26
Porto	4 819 168	231 800	0.54	193.97

*Data is only available at the municipality level (not parishes)

Source: travelBI (2022)

Table 2: Sample Size and Distribution

	Porto		Guimarães		PNPG		Total	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
Total Respondents	365	48.22	264	34.87	128	16.91	757	100.00

Source: Author's elaboration

The questionnaire included mainly closed questions aimed at profiling the sample (namely the length of residence), the residents' views and sentiments towards tourism, economic and cultural opportunities, and any constraints caused by tourism. Five-point Likert-type scales were used to assess residents' perceptions, as suggested in the literature (Vagias, 2006).

Data was collected face-to-face (Bäckström, 2008; Alreck & Settle, 1995) to control respondents' legitimacy and representativeness; only residents were invited to complete the questionnaire. Online tools were also considered but discarded because the response rate tends to be lower, as recruiting participants is more complex (Hansen & Hurwitz, 1946). A pre-test was carried out, involving 30 people living in Porto. The questionnaire fits the aim and objectives (Veal, 2018). The primary data collection took place between May 2021 and May 2022. Respondents were approached in several outdoor public areas and in their homes.

3.4 Data Analysis

Data analysis, descriptive and inferential, was conducted through SPSS (Pallant, 2020). The inferential analysis (Kruskal-Wallis' test) was aimed at exploring the existence of differences between groups of respondents from the three identified areas (independent variables) as showcasing different levels of demand and tourist behaviours, which might cause residents to perceive tourism impacts

differently (e.g., Devine et al., 2009; Gursoy et al., 2019; Muresan et al., 2019).

4 Results and Discussion

The data collection process enabled a sample that reflects the size and structure of the population, representative of each location (Table 3). Age groups and genders are well-balanced and equally represented. Most respondents are active, often employed by third parties in Porto and Guimarães, and more often self-employed in PNPG villages. Fewer job opportunities are available in these distant, rural areas, leading people to start their own initiatives and be self-sufficient. Education levels also vary amongst the three regions, with Guimarães registering a higher level of high education degrees, whereas in PNPG villages, more people have lower levels of education.

Most respondents are well acquainted with the regions where they live, as they have lived in the research locations for a long time (more than half had lived there for over 25 years, and almost a quarter had lived there for more than 50 years). We can anticipate that respondents are well acquainted with the development of tourism and its consequences as they have lived through the process of touristification and the exponential increase in tourism demand over the last few years.

As mentioned above and as suggested in the literature, regional characteristics (urban vs. rural/natural,

Table 3: Residents' Profile

	Porto		Guimarães		PNPG		Total	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
Total Respondents	365	48.22	264	34.87	128	16.91	757	100.00
Length of residence in the area								
≤10 years	60	16.4	49	18.6	16	12.5	125	16.51
11–25 years	117	32.1	108	40.9	33	25.8	258	34.08
26–49 years	101	27.7	61	23.1	44	34.4	206	27.21
≥50 years	87	23.8	46	17.4	35	27.3	168	22.19
Age								
18–30 years	97	26.6	100	37.9	18	14.1	215	28.40
31–50 years	128	35.1	72	27.3	54	42.2	254	33.55
51–65 years	63	17.3	64	24.2	26	20.3	153	20.21
>65 years	77	21.1	28	10.6	30	23.4	135	17.83
Gender								
Female	191	52.3	149	56.4	71	55.5	411	54.29
Male	174	47.7	114	43.2	57	44.5	345	45.57
Civil status								
Single	104	28.5	105	39.8	40	31.3	249	32.89
Married/non-marital cohabitation	185	50.7	121	45.8	65	50.8	371	49.01
Divorced/separated	36	9.9	23	8.7	11	8.6	70	9.25
Widowed	40	11.0	15	5.7	12	9.4	67	8.85
Academic qualifications								
Cannot read or write	1	0.3	1	0.38	6	4.7	8	1.06
I can read but no school	2	0.5	2	0.76	0	0.0	4	0.53
1st cycle (primary education)	75	20.0	44	16.67	37	28.9	156	20.61
Intermediate (9th grade)	112	29.9	28	10.61	26	20.3	166	21.93
Secondary/vocational (12th grade)	93	24.8	78	29.55	43	33.6	214	28.27
High education	92	24.5	111	42.05	16	12.5	219	28.93
Labour status								
Domestic	7	1.9	4	1.5	7	5.5	18	2.38
Student	38	10.4	56	21.2	6	4.7	100	13.21
Self-employed	54	14.8	26	9.8	44	34.4	124	16.38
Retired	68	18.6	41	15.5	25	19.5	134	17.70
Unemployed	21	5.8	5	1.9	12	9.4	38	5.02
Seeking 1st job	9	2.5	13	4.9	0	0.0	22	2.91
Employee of someone else	174	47.7	119	45.1	34	26.6	327	43.20

Source: Author's elaboration

densely vs. sparsely populated, higher vs. lower numbers of visitors) are considered as likely to register different perceptions from residents about tourism and its impact on their lives as other considerations (e.g., Gursoy et al., 2019; Harrill & Potts, 2003; Muresan et al., 2019; Snaith & Haley, 1999; Nunkoo & Ramkissoon, 2010; Kosmaczewska et al., 2016; Gogitidze et al., 2022; Muresan et al., 2021).

Therefore, residents' perceptions were accessed through a 5-point Likert-type scale, ranging from 1 = totally disagree to 5 = totally agree. Results from the three regions were compared. Kruskal-Wallis' test was performed, and results were presented as suggested by Pallant (2020) (Table 5). Although the full questionnaire was longer, five items, both from a positive and negative stance, were selected as the most relevant examples of impacts, on the basis of previous studies' results (Vareiro et al., 2013).

According to the results, residents from Porto and Guimarães, to some extent, have a more positive perception of tourism than residents from PNPG. Kruskal-Wallis results show statistically significant differences ($p = 0.001$) concerning all aspects identified. Respondents from Porto e Guimarães manifested agreement ($M = 4$) about benefits and related opportunities, namely the contribution of tourism to the image of the locations, improvement of infrastructures, opportunities for the establishment of local businesses, and preservation of tangible (monuments) and intangible (traditions) heritage. Respondents from PNPG have a less positive perception, as they expressed more uncertain/unsure perceptions ($M = 3$), namely about tourism contributing to job opportunities and heritage preservation. This contradicts the literature (Cardoso & Silva, 2018; Muresan et al., 2019; Veríssimo et al., 2020), suggesting that residents' perceptions of tourism and its impact are likely less favourable in places where tourism flows are more intense. On the other hand, the results are by the perspective that perception of economic benefits, which are more visible in Porto, is also associated with positive attitudes (Ambrož, 2008) in more distant, rural or natural areas, levels of tourism activity are often less intense and so are the perceived impacts (e.g., Kosmaczewska et al., 2016), such as job opportunities. Less tourism dynamic conditions, economic activity, and tourism-driven entrepreneurship are less frequent, limiting employment opportunities (Kosmaczewska et al., 2016).

Tourism is perceived as causing little negative impact on residents' way of living or damage to the environment/heritage. Still, residents' views about these aspects were statistically significantly different ($p = 0.001$) amongst the three regions (Table 5). Its contribution to increasing prices is perceived by residents in Porto and Guimarães to a greater extent, particularly in Guimarães ($M_d = 5$),

whereas PNPG is not seen as relevant. In urban areas, especially historic city centres, the increase in house prices is often associated with real estate speculation and the adaptation of properties for tourist accommodation (Cardoso & Silva, 2018; Pinheiro, 2019), and house abandonment is related to negative perceptions of tourism impacts (Ferreira & Castro, 2021).

Environmental degradation and loss of cultural identity are perceived less by residents in Guimarães, whereas tourism's ability to disrupt residents' daily lives is more perceived in Porto. In contrast, its influence in reducing traditional shopping is less visible in Porto.

To understand a possible bias influenced by economic interests, residents were asked if either they or any family member were related in some way to tourism businesses. Results demonstrate that the majority is not, although a higher percentage in Gerês (41.4%). Qui-square test reveals no significant differences between regions ($p = 0.79$).

According to the literature, these results might affect their perceptions, given the predominant positive assessment from residents in Gerês, as described above (Table 6). This is something to explore further through linear regression in future analysis.

5 Conclusions

Results suggest that inhabitants from the three locations, in general, are well acquainted with the areas they live in (most have lived there for quite a long time). Therefore, their perceptions about how tourism positively or negatively affects their lives and places are grounded and informed by experience (as discussed by Butler, 2020). Respondents place more value on the positive impacts and related opportunities. As illustrated by earlier research (Azevedo, 2010; Silva et al., 2022; Vareiro et al., 2013), residents living in historical city centres like Porto and Guimarães consider increases in visitor numbers as associated with economic benefits, such as job opportunities. Results also point to a prevailing positive perspective on the social impacts of tourism, following the literature (Borges et al., 2020; Vareiro et al., 2013). Respondents consider that tourism improves local infrastructures, particularly in urban areas, as suggested by other studies (Gomes, 2020; Silva, 2017; Martins, 2019). Considering statistical data concerning the number of overnights and number of beds (Table 1, Section 3.2 Research Design), Porto presents much higher density levels (0.54 as opposed to 0.05 and 0.09 in Guimarães and Gerês,

Table 4: Residents' perceptions of positive impacts

	N	M	Md	MR
Improved the image of the place				
Porto	365	4.11	4	339.74
Guimarães	264	4.58	5	482.51
PN Peneda-Gerês	128	3.73	4	277.46
Total	757			
Kruskal-Wallis' test results		X² = 136.180 df = 2 p = 0.001		
Infrastructure improvement				
Porto	365	4.08	4	380.08
Guimarães	264	4.28	4	444.79
PN Peneda-Gerês	128	3.37	4	240.22
Total	757			
Kruskal-Wallis' test results		X² = 65.561 df = 2 p = 0.001		
Opportunities for local businesses				
Porto	365	4.12	4	380.05
Guimarães	264	4.29	4	448.28
PN Peneda-Gerês	128	3.30	4	233.12
Total	757			
Kruskal-Wallis' test results		X² = 77.778 df = 2 p = 0.001		
Increased jobs for residents				
Porto	365	4.16	4	435.29
Guimarães	264	3.93	4	387.12
PN Peneda-Gerês	128	2.91	3	201.73
Total	757			
Kruskal-Wallis' test results		X² = 46.747 df = 2 p = 0.001		
Enabled heritage preservation				
Porto	365	3.53	4	360.35
Guimarães	264	3.95	4	452.93
PN Peneda-Gerês	120	3.17	3	279.72
Total	757			
Kruskal-Wallis' test results		X² = 88.299 df = 2 p = 0.001		

N = cases; *M* = mean; *Md* = median; *MR* = mean Rank; X^2 = Chi-square; *df* = degrees of freedom; *p* = significance level

Source: Author's elaboration

respectively), as well as intensity levels (193.97 against 2.26 in Guimarães and 0.39 in Gerês). These values justify the perspective (as stated above, in section 3.1) that Porto could/would be suffering from over-tourism, exceeding adequate carrying capacity, and anticipating negative perceptions from residents. Surprisingly, their perceptions are positive in almost every aspect, except for the price increase. The fact that the study was

conducted after the reduction of COVID-19 is likely to bias results, exacerbating positive perceptions. The effect of low levels, or no tourism at all, has evidenced, to some extent, economic dependency on tourism, and the fear of a recession and the associated social crisis seems far more feared than crowds of tourists.

Despite intense tourism development in the specified areas, particularly in Porto, over the last few years,

Table 5: Residents' Perceptions of Negative Impacts

	<i>N</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>Md</i>	<i>MR</i>
Increased prices of goods and services				
Porto	365	4.05	4	370.61
Guimarães	264	4.44	5	483.54
PN Peneda-Gerês	128	3.04	3	187.30
Total	757			
Kruskal-Wallis' test results		X²=173.927 df=2 p=0.001		
Environmental degradation				
Porto	365	2.83	3	413.81
Guimarães	264	2.29	2	305.54
PN Peneda-Gerês	128	2.93	3	431.25
Total	757			
Kruskal-Wallis' test results		X²=29.440 df=2 p=0.001		
Reduction of traditional shopping				
Porto	365	1.92	2	377.14
Guimarães	264	1.97	2	354.28
PN Peneda-Gerês	128	2.30	2	435.30
Total	757			
Kruskal-Wallis' test results		X²=16.469 df=2 p=0.001		
Causes loss of cultural identity				
Porto	365	2.30	2	410.80
Guimarães	264	1.87	2	316.26
PN Peneda-Gerês	127	2.34	2	415.04
Total	756			
Kruskal-Wallis' test results		X²=12.795 df=2 p=0.001		
Disrupts daily life of residents				
Porto	365	2.97	3	455.52
Guimarães	264	2.08	2	293.09
PN Peneda-Gerês	128	2.30	2	337.97
Total	757			
Kruskal-Wallis' test results		X²= 53.044 df= 2 p= 0.001		

N = cases; *M* = mean; *Md* = median; *MR* = mean Rank; X^2 = Chi-square; *df* = degrees of freedom; *p* = significance level

Source: Author's elaboration

residents have not considered it to have affected the environment and urban landscapes, and their quality of life is not seen as being jeopardised.

On the other hand, a generalised positive assessment is evident, considering the improvement in the region's image and heritage preservation.

The economic factors were better perceived and valued by residents in urban areas, where business dynamics are

more evident and job opportunities more frequent. Residents' perception of economic benefits seems negatively associated with sources of income related to tourism. Most respondents are not employed in tourism (neither are their family members), mainly in Porto and Guimarães, whereas in Gerês, almost half of respondents are. Perceptions about positive impacts are more positive in the cities. In Gerês, half of the residents are employed or have

Table 6: Employment in the Tourism Sector

	Porto		Guimarães		Gerês	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
Total respondents	365		264		128	
Family member employed in tourism	124	34.0	79	29.9	53	41.4
Accommodation	30	24.2	16	20.3	18	34.0
Restaurants	57	46.0	33	41.8	28	52.8
Transportation	14	11.3	4	5.1	10	18.9
Agencies and Tour Operators	18	14.5	11	13.9	2	3.8
Events, Entertainment, and Culture	12	9.7	11	13.9	12	22.6
$\chi^2 = 5.085 \quad df = 2 \quad p = 0.79$						

Source: Author's elaboration

relatives employed in the tourism sector, but residents are less enthusiastic about economic impacts. The perception of how relevant tourism is for the local economy will likely explain the different attitudes. In Gerês, levels of tourism are lower, and the local economy is not so dependent on tourism-generated income.

Most residents generally perceive the impacts on the quality of facilities and the environment as positive, regardless of the location. Older and long-term residents tend to be less impressed by tourism's potential benefits and less favourable to tourism development.

Caution is suggested, however, when interpreting these results because data collection took place in 2021 and 2022, and the effects of zero tourism may be influencing and exacerbating positive perceptions. With the constraining effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, tourism fell to unforeseen scenarios, from overwhelming to zero tourism levels. Both extremes are considered undesirable, risking local economies and natural and social ecosystems (Butler, 2020). In Gerês, tourism levels were lower before COVID-19, and the decrease in number of tourists was less evident than were the increase in demand for natural and rural areas during and after the pandemic. On the other hand, its economy seems to not be dependent on tourism, with lower density and intensity levels and a more diversified economic structure grounded on primary activities. In Porto, dependency on tourism may have caused a biased protective attitude towards tourism.

Under present circumstances, the acceptance and practical involvement in tourism activity of the three communities are evident. Nonetheless, shortly after surpassing the memory and effects of COVID-19, perceptions may evolve to less favourable stances. Particularly in Porto, given the level of tourism development and its foreseen

increase, destination management organisations, including the municipality, should consider a thorough analysis of carrying capacity and a proactive development plan, determining acceptable levels of tourism growth and establishing limits. Negative perceptions or unwanted growth may result in conflict between different groups and movements, which in turn can lead to behaviours that hinder or stop tourism development.

World Heritage Sites (Porto and Guimarães) and protected areas (Gerês) are expected to be increasingly attractive to tourists. Several potential drawbacks can be associated with tourism development, particularly concerning alterations to natural ecosystems in Gerês if the number of tourists and their access to sensitive areas is not controlled. In contrast, in Porto and Guimarães (even if to a smaller extent), impacts on heritage and cultural identity can hinder their positioning and classification by UNESCO. These negative consequences can be mitigated through participatory and integrated tourism planning processes. By implementing strategic plans and making informed political decisions, tourism development can provide a crucial opportunity to strike a balance between conserving natural resources and fostering economic growth. That is why studies like this are essential.

Suitable planning and management strategies must be considered, integrating the views of the hosting community as a relevant group of stakeholders. Involving and informing the local population can enhance their motivation to participate in tourism development actively. Support for the development of tourism from residents is necessary to ensure the long-term success of destinations. If not considered and properly integrated, the local population may become hostile toward tourists, eventually contributing to the destination's decline.

Monitoring host attitudes toward tourism facilitates sustainable development, avoiding unexpected reactions and moderating unforeseen or undesired consequences, enabling moderation (or compensation against) of the unavoidable negative impacts of tourism.

Limitations and Further Research

The main limitation we identified is that it was restricted to a limited number of sites in the territories under study, particularly in the case of the PNPG. This aspect makes it difficult to generalise the data. Future research should take this into account, seeking broader territorial coverage. Additionally, the reliance on self-reported perceptions as the measure of satisfaction introduces the potential for response bias. The views of other interlocutors who also represent the local community, such as municipalities and parish councils or business associations, would allow them to triangulate results, despite this approach being used in previous studies carried out by the authors, particularly for the historic centre of Porto (e.g., Silva et al., 2022).

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Bionotes

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