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Senior Tourism in Algarve: Agreeability and Functionality as Drivers to an Integrated Approach of Public Policies

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Abstract

The tourism economy in Portugal is very dependent on the so-called factor of seasonality (PENT, 2013), which is understood as a strong obstacle to a better development of this sector of activity (PwC Portugal, 2014). The senior tourism demand, whose willingness to travel throughout the year is recognized (Demunter, 2012), can help to reduce the impact of seasonality. For this, it is important to know the underlying factors of attractiveness and satisfaction of Portuguese tourist offer regarding elderly population. With this aim, the authors developed an empirical study, confined to the Algarve Region, with data collection from 538 senior guests, mainly European citizens, who were hosted in 4 and 5 star hotels in this Region during the 2011/2012 low season (October 2011 to March 2012). Within the initial formulation of the problem, it was considered that the type of stay and socio-demographic characteristics of respondents would act as mediators between the factors of attractiveness (which leads to choose the destination Algarve) and the resulting satisfaction (for guests). This satisfaction, in turn, proved to be dependent on the size designated by agreeability (affective bond between person and place moderated by personal experiences) and functionality (dimension linked to the hotel performance). As a result of the statistical analysis, the authors have been able to develop an explanatory model of the attractiveness of the Algarve as a tourism product and the satisfaction of elderly users in low season. The center of this model is formed by the agreeability dimension, here understood as the quality that gives pleasure to the guests and that also includes physical characteristics of the hotel, as well as esthetic features, but also address aspects related to the promotion of the tourist destination and the cultural identity and heritage of the place. These results, based on a multiple regression analysis model, underline the need for an integrated approach to the tourism promotion in Portugal, involving different stakeholders, public and private, and reviving the discussion of the role of public policies in a economy sector where prevail private companies.

Keywords: Attractiveness; hotels; Algarve; senior guests.