

LIVING IN A RURAL TOURISM DESTINATION – EXPLORING THE VIEWS OF LOCAL COMMUNITIES¹

VIVER NUM DESTINO TURÍSTICO RURAL – ANÁLISE DAS VISÕES DAS COMUNIDADES LOCAIS

Elisabete Figueiredo

elisa@ua.pt (corresponding author)

Assistant Professor at the Department of Social, Political and Territorial Sciences. Full researcher at GOVCOPP – Research Unit on Governance, Competitiveness and Public Policies. University of Aveiro

Elisabeth Kastenholz

elisabethk@ua.pt

Associate Professor at the Department of Management, Economics and Industrial Engineering. Full researcher at GOVCOPP – Research Unit on Governance, Competitiveness and Public Policies. University of Aveiro

Claúdia Pinho

claudiapinho@ua.pt

Researcher at the Department of Management, Economics and Industrial Engineering. University of Aveiro

ABSTRACT/RESUMO

This paper addresses the views of the residents of two Portuguese small villages on tourism and tourists. Starting by discussing rural areas as tourism destinations, the paper aims at unveil local perceptions and attitudes regarding the impacts and the benefits of tourism activities in the communities, as well as local views on the interaction processes with tourists. Empirical evidence demonstrates that interaction, although appreciated, is not valued in the same way in the two villages, reflecting diverse stages of tourism development. However, perceptions on the impacts and main beneficiaries of tourism activities are quite similar in the two communities, following the main findings of literature regarding residents' attitudes towards rural tourism and demonstrating a clear valorisation of the economic and social over the environmental impacts. In the same sense, local residents identify the main beneficiaries of tourism positive economic impacts with the agents related to the supply of tourism activities.

Este artigo analisa as visões que têm os residentes em duas pequenas aldeias portuguesas acerca do turismo e dos turistas. A partir de uma reflexão sobre as zonas rurais como destinos turísticos, este trabalho tem por objetivo revelar as perceções e atitudes relativamente aos impactos e benefícios das atividades turísticas nas comunidades locais, bem como conhecer as visões dos residentes sobre os processos de interação com os turistas. A evidência empírica demonstra que essa interação, ainda que genericamente apreciada, não é valorizada do mesmo modo nas duas aldeias analisadas, refletindo diferentes fases de desenvolvimento do turismo. No entanto, as perceções acerca dos impactos e benefícios das atividades turísticas são muito semelhantes nas duas comunidades, seguindo de perto as conclusões evidenciadas neste domínio pelos estudos acerca das atitudes dos residentes face ao turismo rural e demonstrando uma valorização clara dos impactos económicos e sociais sobre os efeitos ambientais. Na

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Keywords: Local Inhabitants' Attitudes; Rural Tourism; Social Interactions; Tourism Impacts

JEL Codes: L83, Z13

1. INTRODUCTION

Rural areas all over Europe and particularly in more remote regions are gradually losing their traditional productive function and being converted in consumption spaces, particularly for recreation, leisure and tourism activities. These transformations occur in a context that can be characterized as dominated by dynamic and far-reaching global relations, which make even the most remote village of Europe a potential spot of interest and interaction with a particular type of 'urban species': the rural tourist, frequently living in a metropolitan area and dreaming of the 'lost rural paradise' (e.g. Figueiredo, Kastenholz, & Lima, 2013). Central elements in the consumption of rural areas as tourism destinations are the environmental and natural perceived qualities of the rural, as well as their cultural traditions and idealized ways of life.

Rural inhabitants tend to progressively adapt to the demands and the needs of the rural tourists, commodifying rural areas and rurality and trying to find alternative sources of income and local development. In fact, when assessing rural residents' attitudes towards tourism activities, economic positive effects consistently stand out as the main positive impacts perceived.

Although there is an abundant literature regarding the need to explore and to understand the residents views and perceptions on tourism related impacts and beneficiaries and the correspondence between perceptions and attitudes regarding tourism, it is not so frequent to relate those views and perceptions with other dimensions that are part of the living in a rural tourism destination: the valorisation of social interactions with tourists and the place attachment and nostalgia dimensions as relevant variables in shaping local inhabitants views regarding tourism activities. This paper, based on previous (and preliminary) findings (Kastenholz, Eusébio, Carneiro, & Figueiredo, 2013), aims to shed further light on these dimensions as well as on the way they interact to form the perceptions of local communities regarding tourism activities.

Based on the empirical evidence produced through a survey conducted to the residents in two small Portuguese Villages – Janeiro de Cima and Linhares da Beira – (N=170), this paper aims to discuss their views on tourism activities, particularly regarding interaction with tourists; economic, cultural and environmental impacts as well as the main beneficiaries perceived.

mesma linha, os residentes locais identificam como principais beneficiários dos impactos positivos do turismo os agentes diretamente relacionados com a oferta de atividades turísticas.

Palavras-chave: Atitudes dos Habitantes Locais; Impactos do Turismo; Interações Sociais; Turismo Rural.

Códigos JEL: L83, Z13

2. RURAL AREAS AS TOURISM DESTINATIONS

Rural areas all over Europe, but particularly in remote or marginal regions, underwent over the past decades major, and well documented, changes mainly due to the loss of their productive character (e.g. Figueiredo, 2003; Shucksmith, Cameron, & Merridew, 2006). Although diverse in character and in scope in different rural contexts, these transformations are related to the main changes occurred in agriculture (Cloke, 2006; Halfacree, 2006; Figueiredo, 2008; Oliveira Baptista, 2006). The loss of relevance, both in social and economic terms, of the traditional productive function of rural contexts conducted to a representation and identification, in social and institutional terms, of the rural as multifunctional space in which tourism and leisure activities possess a major expression.

Rural areas continuously acquire new functions and social meanings, rendering them as places of/for consumption. Particularly in remote rural areas, consumption-oriented practices are gaining terrain, performed by urban populations that possess a general idyllic vision on the rural and on its qualities. Some features of rural areas are rather central in these processes of demand and consumption: the representations of idealized ways of life; the perceived environmental qualities; the preservation of traditional landscapes, the genuine architectural characteristics and the authenticity of food productions (e.g. Crouch, 2006; Bell, 2006; Figueiredo, 2009; Figueiredo et al., in press; Halfacree, 2007).

This *rural idyll* is one of the factors attracting visitors to rural territories, but also other motivations of rural tourists have been identified, actually suggesting a heterogenous rural tourist market (Kastenholz, 2004; Frochot, 2005; Molera & Albaladejo, 2007; Sidali & Schulze, 2010; Park & Yoon, 2009): closeness to nature stands out as a dominant theme, for relaxation, recreation, wellness, sports or genuine nature experience; socialization (with family and friends) in a distinct environment is relevant for some, while a general interest in exploring a region, searching culture and novelty attracts others. The contrast to mass and standardized forms of tourism – small scale, personalized contacts, traditional environments and community structures, frequently accessible through family run rural tourism accommodation units – is also often stressed as a main attractor of rural tourism (Cawley & Gillmore, 2008; Lane, 1994; Kastenholz & Sparrer, 2009). According to Clemenson and Lane (1997) rural tourism may actually be considered a series of niche activi-

ties within a larger niche activity (e.g. eco-tourism, nature tourism, agri-tourism, wellness, adventure, food & wine tourism), resulting in a complex, multi-faceted sector, with large diversity of both tourist motivations and territorial/entrepreneurial offerings (Lane, 2009).

Global market trends reveal increasing demand for different holiday experiences, in different settings and with distinct themes and activities, experiences that are unique, involving and memorable and that address concerns about the “authentic”, health and environment, demands that rural territories must increasingly consider when yielding sustainable tourism development (Chambers, 2009; Kastenholz, Carneiro, & Marques et al., 2012; Lane, 2009). The integration of the rural community into these experiences may play a central role, since they may not only provide a comforting, appreciated welcoming atmosphere, but hosts may function as “cultural brokers” helping tourists to better understand and, to a certain extent, get integrated into local community (Cohen, 1988), i.e. live more “authentic” and meaningful experiences, as found in a prior qualitative study on the rural tourist experience in the two villages (Kastenholz et al., 2013).

3. ATTITUDES OF RURAL INHABITANTS TOWARDS TOURISM

Tourism is among the new functions of rural areas, being considered an activity which can contribute to local development. Tourism has in fact, as extensively studied (e.g. Haralambopoulos & Pizam, 1996), relevant impacts on local communities and generally leads to high involvement of residents and produces positive and negative attitudes closely related with its impacts.

Since the seminal work of Doxey (1975) and his proposal of the *irritation index* (Irridex) and of Butler (1980) of the *life cycle model of a tourism destination*, that tourism literature has dealt with the need to study and explain residents attitudes and behaviours regarding tourists and tourism activities. Kuvan and Akan (2005) point out that there are different types of residents within a community and consequently diverse types of attitudes regarding tourism, dependent of both intrinsic and extrinsic factors. Among the first, economic dependency on tourism activities seems to emerge as an important factor to explain positive attitudes of residents towards tourism activities and tourism development on their communities.

Ap and Crompton (1998) and Perdue, Long & Allen (1987) also conclude that the perception of the outcomes of tourism activities in a local community is the more relevant factor when predicting residents' attitudes. Impacts of tourism activities have been generally divided in three main categories: economic, environmental and socio-cultural.

In terms of social and cultural impacts, literature suggests the decline in traditions, materialism, increasing crime rates, social conflicts and crowding as being the most significant negative effects (Brunt & Courtney, 1999; Andereck, Valentine, Knopf, & Vogt, 2005). As positive effects, the im-

provement of services within the communities, additional recreation and cultural facilities and encouragement of cultural activities and traditional arts and innovation are the most referred to.

Regarding environmental impacts, rural tourism activities often occur in fragile environments and in communities less prepared to face its potential negative impacts. Andereck (1995) point out air, water and noise pollution, as well as wildlife destruction, damages in natural habitats and geological formations and deforestation, as the more common environmental negative impacts. As positive ones, the preservation of landscapes and natural areas, as well as natural resources seems to be the most significant.

As suggested before, tourism may play a significant role for the economic development of rural contexts, due to the effective economic impacts and to the potentially large multiplier effects. It is to be expected that, in face of major positive economic impacts, residents will develop also positive attitudes regarding tourism and conversely, when tourism impacts are negative and not perceived as benefiting the overall community, inhabitants tend to adopt negative attitudes and behaviours. In many remote rural contexts the connection between tourism and local development has proved to be relatively faint (Ribeiro & Marques, 2002; Pato, 2012), mainly due to the fact that the potential benefits of rural tourism (which is often a small-scale, family based activity) are generally limited to a few sectors or social groups, therefore not creating well paid jobs and not contributing to enhance the quality of life and generating social inequalities. Despite these aspects, and the diversity we may find accordingly to diverse rural contexts, literature suggests that, in general, local communities are prone to embrace rural tourism initiatives in their communities, in a very positive manner.

4. METHODOLOGY AND CASE STUDIES

A case study approach was adopted here to allow deeper understanding of a “contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context” (Yin, 2003, p. 13), in this case the residents' views on tourism activities, particularly regarding interaction with tourists; economic, cultural and environmental impacts as well as beneficiaries perceived. To understand those visions, a survey was conducted in two Portuguese villages, between June and December 2012, by trained research assistants and researchers of the ORTE Project's team. Data was inserted in a SPSS database, permitting descriptive and inferential analysis. The survey was applied to a sample of the population in both villages, using a *quota* sampling technique based on age and gender criteria. 37% of the total population aged over 15 years old was surveyed in Janeiro de Cima (100 out of a total of 271) and 30% in Linhares da Beira (70 out of a total of 233), resulting on 170 valid questionnaires.

The questionnaire was designed in order to respond to the project main aims. Besides one section devoted to the information regarding the respondents profile and the level

of nostalgia and place attachment, the questionnaire also included sections dealing with the interactions between residents and tourists; residents' perceptions on the economic, environmental and socio-cultural impacts of tourism as well as on the views on benefits and main beneficiaries of tourism activities.

Janeiro de Cima and Linhares da Beira are located in the Central Region of Portugal (Figure 1).

FIGURE 1. LOCATION OF THE VILLAGES



These villages were selected based on several criteria (existing tourism accommodation, attractions, tourism demand and diversity of tourism products and resources and the fact of being located in a remote region). Linhares da Beira and Janeiro de Cima are two villages with about 300 inhabitants (INE, 2011), sharing many demographic, social and economic features with other rural settlements of the country's hinterland, such as population ageing (Kastenholz et al., 2013).

Linhares, with his typical granite houses, narrow streets and an impressive medieval castle, became in 1994 part of the network *Historical Villages of Portugal*. Situated in heart of the *Serra da Estrela* mountain (and Natural Park), it shows good natural conditions, altitude and climate for a radical sport – paragliding. According to official statistics, this historical village receives more than 10.000 visitors a year (AHP, 2010). The village offers a tourism information office (in his castle), and four active official lodging units, and even two restaurants, a bar and a craft shop.

Janeiro de Cima integrates the *Schist Villages Network* (since 2004) because of his constructions made with a local stone, schist, but also because of his rich traditions, like the linen articles that can be seen in the Casa das Tecedeiras (weaver's house with multiple functions: museum, tea room, and shop, and a place of weaving activity and training for residents) and because it offers two official rural tourism units, a restaurant, a bar, a pub (ADXTUR, 2013). It lies on the banks of the river Zêzere, very popular in the summer, particularly because of the river beach. There are no official statistics regarding visitors. However, the parish

is sure that during the weekends in August the population almost duplicates, mainly due to the large number of residential tourists and those visiting friends and relatives.

5. LIVING IN A RURAL TOURISM DESTINATION – RESULTS

As mentioned before, the survey was undertaken with 170 residents, 70 from Linhares da Beira (LB) and 100 from Janeiro de Cima (JC). The profile of the residents in the sample is summarized in Table 1. Women are slightly more present in this sample than men, corresponding to the real population's distribution (55%), most respondents are older than 40 years (78%), and possess low levels of education (67% basic education; 15% even no formal education). Most respondents are retired (50%) and only 30% employed (in the construction industry, tourism, agriculture and others). Most of the respondents had lived some time outside the village (75%), particularly in urban areas (81%) and many had lived abroad (56%). The main reasons indicated to leave the village were: seeking for better life conditions (36%) and professional reasons (28%). This profile is similar in the two villages.

TABLE 1. PROFILE OF THE RESIDENTS

	Total		LB		JC	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Gender						
Male	76	44.71	31	44.29	45	45.00
Female	94	55.29	39	55.71	55	55.00
Age						
18 – 20	9	5.29	6	8.57	3	3.00
21 - 40	28	16.47	11	15.71	17	17.00
41 – 64	60	35.29	25	35.71	35	35.00
≥ 65	73	42.94	28	40.00	45	45.00
Education level						
No formal education	30	15.15	9	11.54	21	17.50
First level	103	52.02	40	51.28	63	52.50
Secondary education	46	23.23	18	23.08	28	23.33
Upper secondary and superior	19	9.60	11	14.10	8	6.67
Economic status						
Retired	84	49.70	30	42.86	54	54.55
Employed	50	29.59	24	34.29	26	26.26
Other	35	20.71	16	22.86	19	19.19
Lived outside the village						
No	43	25.00	21	30.00	22	22.00
Yes	127	75.00	49	70.00	78	78.00

Table 2 summarizes the respondents' positions about tourism and development policies, levels of place attachment and nostalgia.

TABLE 2. ATTITUDES TOWARDS TOURISM, NOSTALGIA AND PLACE ATTACHMENT

	Mean		
	2 villages	LB	JC
Attitudes regarding tourism			
I support tourism development in my village	4.42		
Overall, I am in favor of tourism in my village	4.20		
In this village there is a lack of training in tourism	3.51		
I like to get involved in issues related to tourism development	3.15		
I know and seek information about tourism policies for this village	2.81		
The State must take measures to support preservation of natural resources, which are very important for tourism	4.61		
Place attachment			
I feel very attached to this place and the people here	4.67		
I identify strongly with this place	4.65		
This place means a great deal to me	4.64		
This place is very special to me	4.64	4.51	4.74 *
I miss this place when I'm not here	4.48	4.25	4.65 *
I'd rather be here than in any other place	4.34		
No other place can be compared to my village	4.27		
Nostalgia			
This place reminds me of my roots	4.61		
This place brings back memories of good times in the past	4.50		
Seasonal impacts			
It would be nice to have more visitors during the low season (e.g. in winter)	4.34		
It is the best to have only a few months with many visitors and the others quiet and peaceful	2.60		
It would be nice to have fewer visitors in high season (e.g. in the summer)	1.98		

* t-test revealing a difference that is significant at the 0.05 level.

Likert items use a scale of 1–5 (in which 5 stands for “fully agree” and 1 for “do not agree at all”).

The highest values of means, in the comparisons between groups, are highlighted in bold

Results demonstrate that the inhabitants inquired express satisfaction with tourism and support its development in their villages. Residents do like tourists coming all year around and express the desire for more tourist flows in the low season. In this respect, they expect that institutional agencies preserve natural resources as important tourist attractions, recognize, however, the lack of training in tourism, but also admit that they do not really look for

information on tourism development policies, being only moderately involved. Residents further reveal high levels of place attachment, with this attachment being stronger in Janeiro de Cima than in Linhares. Residents generally confirm that the village and its people are significant and special to them, making them nostalgically remember their roots.

Table 3 shows residents' perceptions regarding tourism impacts in their village.

TABLE 3. PERCEPTION OF TOURISM IMPACTS

	Mean		
	2 villages	LB	JC
Environment impacts			
Tourism in the village leads to increased local traffic	3.79	4.09	3.57 *
Tourism helps preserve natural resources (e.g. river, forest, mountains, fields)	3.74	3.34	4.03 *
Tourism contributes to creating sports areas, ATMs, roads, gardens, sanitation, etc.	3.22		
Tourism leads to an increased level of noise	2.82	3.30	2.48 *
Tourism leads to an increase in waste and pollution (e.g. air, water, etc.)	2.46	2.87	2.15 *
Tourism spoils the landscape and local nature	1.71	1.88	1.59 *
Tourism in the village should be avoided, to better preserve this site	1.48		

(continuation)

	Mean		
	2 villages	LB	JC
Economic impacts			
Tourism makes the economy grow because of the money that visitors spend here	4.05	3.80	4.23 *
Tourism helps create new local businesses (e.g. cafes, craft shops, etc.)	3.92		
Tourism brings benefits to only a few people	3.70		
Tourism helps improve the quality of commercial establishments	3.65		
Tourism brings more positive than negative economic impacts	3.63		
Tourism provides jobs for local residents	2.96		
Tourism increases price of properties, making it difficult to keep families here	2.61		
Tourism contributes to emigrants returning to their homeland	2.60		
Tourism helps create jobs especially for outsiders	2.42		
Tourism stimulates agricultural development	2.24		
Tourism leads to increases in the local price of some goods and services	2.15		
Social impacts			
I would like to see an increase in the number of tourists in my village	4.52		
In this locality, tourism helps to decrease the isolation	4.40		
Tourism makes local residents feel more proud of their village	4.40		
I wish this place was better known / more famous	4.36		
Tourism provides an incentive for the restoration of historical buildings	4.30	4.04	4.47 *
My village would be a dull place if tourists did not visit the village	4.08	4.32	3.92 *
Tourism takes tourists to learn the local culture / traditions	3.85		
Tourism brings more good things than bad to the local culture	3.78		
Tourism helps keeping the traditions, way of life, local arts and trades alive	3.75	3.48	3.95 *
Tourism helps attracting outsiders to come here to live	3.70		
Tourism contributes to increase respect for other cultures	3.52		
Tourism makes us learn new things	3.47	3.23	3.64 *
Tourism helps us to learn about different cultures with visitors	3.46	3.28	3.59 *
Tourism causes increase festivities / local animation	3.35		
Tourism contributes to keep the population here	2.92		
Tourism unites the community and encourages people to work together	2.58	2.19	2.86 *
Tourism contributes to bringing people who misbehave (e.g. noise, trash)	2.09	2.37	1.88 *
I do not usually notice tourists around my village	2.00	1.71	2.20 *
Tourism contributes to increase the stress of residents	1.98	2.32	1.74 *
Tourism increases the consumption of alcohol and drugs	1.89		
Tourism caused changes in our traditional culture	1.88		
Tourism disturbs the local calm and tranquillity	1.83		
Tourism contributes to change some habits of families	1.83		
Tourism causes the locals to spend less time with family and friends	1.73		
Tourism makes typical products more false	1.69		
Tourism brings more crime (e.g. theft, vandalism, etc.)	1.52		
Tourism disturbs religious practices / festivities	1.40		

* t-test revealing a difference that is significant at the 0.05 level

Likert items use a scale of 1-5 (in which 5 stands for "fully agree" and 1 for "do not agree at all")

The highest values of means, in the comparisons between groups, are highlighted in bold

As shown in Table 3, the seasonal impacts are the first mentioned in the list of tourism impacts. Negative environmental impacts are hardly perceived, however being stronger (event though not too relevant globally) in the case of Linhares, where people refer particularly traffic and noise pollution. Generally the economic impacts are considered

positive, particularly regarding the income generated by the presence of tourists and the business opportunities. Despite this recognition of tourism as having positive economic impacts, residents also recognize that the economic positive effects are only felt by few people within the communities, particularly directly related with tourism activities. It is inter-

esting to note that economic impacts regarding job creation and especially agriculture are not as much recognized.

In terms of socio-cultural impacts, residents express a positive view on tourism and tourists, mainly related to the opportunity to break the village isolation; the enjoyment of a lively atmosphere as well as the opportunity to cultural interchange and learning. Tourism is also seen as increasing residents' pride in the communities they live in, fostering at the same time place attachment and identity and helping to preserve local culture and traditions. Despite these findings, and although they still consider worthwhile living in a rural tourism destination, residents tend to recommend the village more as a place to visit (mean of 4.90) than for a place to live (mean of 4.33).

Shortly, tourism is particularly recognized for its social positive impacts, while negative social impacts are hardly felt, eventually a bit more in Linhares than in Janeiro, though, where some feel stressed by tourism.

The type of interaction with tourists is shown in Table 4. This interaction with tourists is more likely to occur when giving information and socializing in daily contexts, than in contexts of closer relationships (in their homes and with their family). So, interaction typically occurs in the street, in restaurants, cafes and in events. As shown in previous works (Figueiredo et al., 2013; Kastenholz et al., 2013) local population value interaction with tourists in a generally positive manner, however the contacts are frequently superficial. As shown in the studies mentioned, residents of Janeiro de Cima assume their role as hosts with more conviction than those of Linhares da Beira, similarly presenting a generally more positive view on tourism and its impacts on local economy.

Table 5 shows the views of local residents on the main beneficiaries of tourism and Table 6 who they think should benefit from tourism.

TABLE 4. INTERACTION WITH TOURISTS

	Mean		
	2 villages	LB	JC
Frequency of occurrence each one of the following situations:			
I have given information about the village to visitors	3.53		
I like to socialize with visitors	3.44		
I feel comfortable when a visitor speaks to me and I try to respond, even if not in my language	3.22		
I socialize with visitors when they buy tourism products	2.50		
I have practiced sports / leisure activities with visitors	1.69		
I have invited visitors to participate in my meals and family celebrations	1.59		
I have invited visitors to come to my home	1.55		
Frequency of contact with visitors			
On the street, when a visitor asks information	3.69	3.89	3.54 *
In restaurants and cafes	2.71		
In religious, cultural and sports events	2.71		
In commerce (e.g. grocery)	2.70	2.41	2.88 *
In the workplace	2.64		
In monuments	2.18		
In bars and pubs	2.16		

* t-test revealing a difference that is significant at the 0.05 level.

Likert items use a scale of 1-5 (in which 5 stands for "always" and 1 for "never").

The highest values of means, in the comparisons between groups, are highlighted in bold.

TABLE 5. WHO ARE THE MAIN BENEFICIARIES OF TOURISM

	Mean		
	2 villages	LB	JC
The owners of hotels and other accommodation	4.05		
The owners of restaurants, cafes and bars	3.98		
The owners of craft shops	3.89	3.67	4.03 *
The owners of other commerce (e.g. grocery, stationery)	3.84		
Population	2.68		
Farmers	1.89		

* t-test revealing a difference that is significant at the 0.05 level

Likert items use a scale of 1-5 (in which 5 stands for "very" and 1 for "nothing")

The highest values of means, in the comparisons between groups, are highlighted in bold

TABLE 6. WHO SHOULD BENEFIT FROM TOURISM

	2 villages		LB		JC	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Population	43	29.66	23	33.82	20	25.97
Farmers	40	27.59	22	32.35	18	23.38
Commerce	27	18.62	7	10.29	20	25.97
Everyone	21	14.48	8	11.76	13	16.88
Others	9	6.21	4	5.88	5	6.49
The owners of restaurants, cafes and bars	4	2.76	3	4.41	1	1.30
The owners of hotels and other accommodation	1	0.69	1	1.47	0	0.00
Total	145	100.00	68	100.00	77	100.00

As previously mentioned, it is clear that the residents consider that the owners of accommodation, restaurants, cafes, craft shops and commercial establishments benefit more with tourism than farmers and the general population. For 58% of the respondents, farmers and general population should have more benefits from tourism activities.

Table 7 shows the perceptions of residents regarding their own contribution to improve tourism in their communities. Data confirms the pride they possess in their

villages and the attachment to it. In fact, residents state that they *'talk about the village everywhere they go'*. Other contributions are expressed in the efforts to maintain and to preserve the environmental and cultural characteristics of the villages and its surroundings and to give tourists information about local aspects, particularly on the historical facts and on cultural traditions. It is worth of notice that in Janeiro de Cima the population seems to engage more in a joint effort to make visitors feel welcome.

TABLE 7. HOW THE POPULATION CONTRIBUTES TO IMPROVE TOURISM

	Mean		
	2 villages	LB	JC
The residents talk about the village everywhere they go	4.48		
The residents keep the village clean and preserved	4.29		
The population takes care of the landscape and nature spaces	4.25		
The population maintains the village's traditions and festivities	4.23		
The population provides visitors with information on the village's history and legends	3.96		
The population makes visitors familiar with the place and helps them enjoy it	3.84	3.63	3.98 *
The population involves visitors in local traditions and festivities	3.50	3.18	3.73 *
The population unites efforts to create activities for visitors	2.25	1.81	2.57 *

* t-test revealing a difference that is significant at the 0.05 level

Likert items use a scale of 1-5 (in which 5 stands for "essential contribution" and 1 for "no contribution")

The highest values of means, in the comparisons between groups, are highlighted in bold

6. CONCLUSION

In this paper we explored some dimensions of the views of the inhabitants of two small Portuguese villages – Linhares da Beira and Janeiro de Cima – on tourism's cultural, environmental and economic impacts and main beneficiaries, as well as their perceptions about host-guest interaction.

Rural areas have acquired new functions in consequence of the declining relevance of agricultural activities in social and economical terms; many of them (particularly the more remote ones) lost their productive character and are increasingly being transformed into places for consumption or to be consumed, mainly through tourism and

leisure related activities (Figueiredo, 2009; Halfacree, 2007). Rural areas are increasingly visited and consumed by urban populations attracted by their idyllic, sometimes idealized, characteristics and by the products they may offer.

As previously discussed, tourism is among the new functions of rural areas and may contribute to foster local development, local inhabitants' self-esteem, pride and even to reinforce local identity and place attachment. Tourism has both positive and negative impacts on rural communities (Andereck, 1995; Haralambopoulos & Pizam, 1996) and may cause diverse types of attitudes among local residents, depending on socio-demographic variables, as well as on the impacts perceived. Economic dependency on tourism activities seem to be amongst the more relevant variables to

explain positive attitudes and support for tourism development in local communities (Kuvan & Akan, 2005).

Empirical evidence discussed in the previous section demonstrates that residents in both villages have, in general, a positive attitude towards tourism and tourists, particularly valuing social interaction with tourists and the economic impacts and main beneficiaries of tourism activities, reinforcing the main findings of the literature in this domain (Ap & Crompton, 1998; Perdue et al., 1987). The main economic impacts identified are related with the income generated by tourists and the business opportunities. However the distribution of economic positive effects is seen as uneven, excluding farmers and the general population. The main beneficiaries of tourism activities identified by the inquired are the ones directly involved in those activities.

The positive attitudes towards tourism and the population's engagement in making visitors feel welcome is more pronounced in Janeiro de Cima than in Linhares da Beira, which may be linked to the fact that in the first village the tourism phenomenon is relatively more recent and less massified, with tourists tending to stay longer, while in Linhares residents may already be more saturated with the sometimes rather massified presence of people just coming to visit the castle, take photos and quickly leave afterwards.

Environmental impacts in both villages are hardly perceived as negative. On the contrary, tourism activities are considered as a way to foster the preservation of natural resources, landscapes and the environment. The same can be said about cultural and social impacts which are perceived as very positive in both villages. In fact, local population seems to value interaction with tourists in a very positive manner, despite the superficiality of the contacts established (mainly occurring in public places and when giving information to tourists).

Tourism is also seen as an opportunity to break the villages' isolation and to enjoy a lively atmosphere, through the possibility it opens of meeting diverse types of people and to learn on other cultures and ways of life, which is in line with the findings, among others, of Andereck et al. (2005) and largely confirms a prior qualitative approach studying social interaction in the villages (Kastenholz et al., 2013). At the same time, through tourism, local inhabitants often feel a boost in their self-esteem, pride and sense of belonging to a special place.

Although the majority of the respondents consider their villages mainly as places to be visited, they are also strongly attached to their local communities and proud to live in a rural tourism destination. For the reasons mentioned, tourism also plays an important role in these perceptions and feelings. In this sense, it seems relevant that the planning of tourism activities in a rural destination takes into account the perceptions, attitudes and feelings of local population, since this would contribute to the sustainable development of local communities as well as to the creation of integrated and rewarded tourism experiences, as we argue in previous works (Kastenholz et al., 2013). At the same time, the consideration of the views and perceptions of local inhabitants

when planning rural tourism activities may contribute to improve their involvement in those activities, consequently reducing the perception of inequalities regarding the impacts and the beneficiaries in the communities. Further research is clearly needed in this domain in order to inform tourism development strategies and initiatives.

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