

# MARKET SEGMENTATION: AN APPLICATION TO THE SCHIST VILLAGE TOURISM DESTINATIONS

## SEGMENTACIJA TRŽIŠTA: PRIMJENA NA TURISTIČKIM DESTINACIJAMA SCHIST VILLAGE



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Preliminary communication

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### Abstract

**Purpose** – The Schist Village network is a sustainable development project in Portugal's Pinhal Interior region that includes 27 villages located in the central inland area of the country. Overall, this study sets out evidence about the motivations, interests, behaviors, and images of visitors/tourists (tourism consumers) regarding the Schist Villages in the area.

**Design/Methodology/Approach** – The sample of individuals interviewed includes a total of 223 individuals (59 international and 164 national tourists), all of whom personally answered the questionnaire.

**Findings and implications** – Through analysis of the survey results obtained, it is possible to chart a profile of Schist Village visitors/tourists, ascertain their preferences and the key attributes associated with the image of this tourist destination and, based on these, put forward strongly focused orientations and guidelines to help develop future marketing plans for this territory.

**Limitations** – One limitation stems from how the data was gathered and analyzed constitutes but a mere “moment” in a fairly vast and dynamic universe given that the questionnaires were completed across a defined and fairly brief period of time. The fact that the questionnaires were handed out by network partners effectively excluded from the study all those tourism consumers who travel and visit the territory without any direct recourse to the services of the aforementioned partners.

### Sažetak

**Svrha** – Mreža Schist Village predstavlja projekt održivoga razvoja u regiji Pinhal Interior, a obuhvaća 27 sela u središnjem području unutrašnjosti Portugala. Istraživanje pruža dokaze o motivima, interesima, ponašanjima te predodžbi koju posjetitelji/turisti (turistički potrošači) imaju o destinaciji Schist Village.

**Metodološki pristup** – Uzorak intervjuiranih posjetitelja uključuje 59 međunarodnih turista te 164 domaća turista, što je ukupno 223 ispitanika koji su osobno sudjelovali u istraživanju.

**Rezultati i implikacije** – Analizom rezultata dobivenih anketiranjem moguće je prikazati profil posjetitelja/turista Schist Villagea, utvrditi njihove preferencije i ključna obilježja povezana s imidžom ove turističke destinacije, te na temelju njih istaknuti jako usredotočene smjernice i upute za razvoj budućih marketinških planova za ovo područje.

**Ograničenja** – Jedno ograničenje proizlazi iz načina na koji su prikupljeni i analizirani podaci, a što predstavlja samo “trenutak” u povelikom i dinamičnom prostornom te vremenskom okviru jer su upitnici podijeljeni i ispunjeni u određenom i relativno kratkom razdoblju. Isto tako, činjenica da su upitnike ispitanicima uručivali partneri u mreži projekta znači da su iz istraživanja isključeni svi oni turisti koji putuju i posjećuju područje, ali izravno ne koriste usluge navedenih partnera.

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**Originality** – This study presents an easy and clear way to segment the market that could be used by several stakeholders in order to improve their targeting activities.

**Keywords** – tourism, Schist Villages, marketing plan, tourism destination, destination image

**Doprinos** – Istraživanje pruža jednostavan i jasan način za segmentaciju tržišta koji bi mogle koristiti različite interesne skupine radi poboljšanja svojih aktivnosti.

**Ključne riječi** – turizam, Schist Village, marketinški plan, turistička destinacija, imidž destinacije

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Given the current context of globalization, regions and their companies are mutually competing in the marketplace and striving to be the most attractive to visitors, tourists, residents, and investors. Focus thus gets placed on the consumer and, to this end, regions strive to adapt the ways they go about meeting the needs and aspirations of consumers and their target markets (Kotler, Haider & Rein, 1993).

Certain regions, due to the attractiveness of their geographical, climatic, historical features, or cultural backgrounds, capitalize on their respective attributes and develop in economic terms, in the process becoming transformed into spaces of tourism production (Crouch & Ritchie, 1999). Currently, tourism activities are one of the world's largest industries, constituting the largest single category in the service sector worldwide and generating correspondingly important economic, social, cultural, and environmental impacts on host regions (Caldwell & Freire, 2004).

The southern European Union member states, while remaining the EU's main tourism region, are nevertheless mature tourism destinations based on a single "sun and sand" product and have recently been losing market share. The competitiveness of these destinations thus requires the diversification of their products (Águas, Veiga & Reis, 2010) and their adaptation to new tourism consumer trends of greater sophistication and heterogeneity (Cunha, 2011).

Tourism constitutes one of the main sectors of the Portuguese economy with increasing weighting, especially in recent years. In 2014, the tourism sector accounted for a major share (5.8 %) of the Portuguese GDP and employed 7.2 % of the active population, or well above the world average of 2.9 % and 3.4 % respectively (WTTC, 2015). Growth in the number of international tourists has outpaced that of national tourists, accounting for 61.4 % of total nights spent in 2014. Among the source markets, four countries (the United Kingdom, France, Germa-

ny, and Spain) play a major role with a considerable overall weighting (57 %), followed by others with significant levels of importance, such as the Netherlands, Brazil, Ireland, Italy, the United States, and Belgium, which collectively account for a further 23 % of the total international arrivals in Portugal (INE, 2015).

In order to foster the sustained growth of the tourism sector, in 2007 Portugal launched the National Tourism Strategy Plan (PENT), which emphasized priorities such as investing in factors of differentiation for the Portuguese tourism sector. Correspondingly, the plan identified the following factors as constituting the value proposal of Portugal as a tourism destination: climate and natural light; history, culture, and tradition; hospitality; and diversity. Three other features were also identified as qualifying Portugal among the range of options open to tourism: authenticity, security, and quality (PENT, 2007).

Within such a diversity-favoring context, the opportunity to explore and promote different tourism destinations seems a natural choice for the country, as is the case with the Schist Villages presented in this article. This is a sustainable development project that spans various villages in the Pinhal Interior region under the management of ADXTUR – Agência para o Desenvolvimento Turístico das Aldeias do Xisto (in English: the Schist Village Tourism Development Agency). This is a regional-level project which, despite media and advertising campaigns that have already been implemented, has not yet succeeded in leveraging its full potential.

This study is exploratory and empirical in its approach and seeks to segment the visitors and tourists arriving in the Schist Villages based upon a market study that enables the identification of the particularities, knowledge, and behaviors of Schist Village visitors and tourists, alongside the image associated with this region. Determining the visitor and tourist profiles proves crucial to ensuring the appropriate targeting of the most relevant market segments. Furthermore, taking into account the existence of two *a priori* seg-

ments, national and international visitors and tourists, the authors also strive to verify whether the destination is perceived in the same way by both groups.

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

### 2.1. Tourism marketing

Tourism may be defined as “*the temporary movement to destinations outside the normal home and workplace, the activities undertaken during the stay, and the facilities created to cater for the needs of tourists*” (Mathieson & Wall, 1982). In turn, the earliest tourism destinations known as such developed thanks to aspects of their climate and/or waters, which together constituted two of the most important poles of tourism attraction and were able to transform a location into an important tourism destination (Cunha, 2011).

In the late 20<sup>th</sup> century, mass tourism began undergoing changes that put into question the future of tourism destinations anchored only on “sun and beach” products, so they have been losing market share while also registering a clear loss in competitiveness (Águas et al., 2010). Many such destinations have entered the decline phase of their life cycles because they have not proven able to adapt to newly emerging trends in tourism consumption, characterized by correspondingly far more sophisticated and heterogeneous needs (Cunha, 2011).

Currently, tourists may be defined as those who “*travel to and stay in places outside their usual environment for more than twenty-four (24) hours and not more than one consecutive year for leisure, business and other purposes not related to the exercise of an activity remunerated from within the place visited*” (WTO, 1995, p. 14), but who now display greater social, political, environment, cultural, and educational awareness, hence driving the emergence of new destinations, new products, and new market segments. According to Cunha (2011), the life cycle of these new destinations also tends to be shorter, because novelty and recreational value represent the main motiva-

tions that influence the choice of tourism destination. To remain competitive, tourism products face the need to multiply the provision of diversified services in response to the needs of consumers. Furthermore, attention has also been focused on how tourism activities increasingly function within networks and on the manner of incorporating the services of a heterogeneous number of operators triggered by tourist activities. To the extent that the destination evolves, the tourism support services have the opportunity to transform these networks through the founding of a competitive strategy to both differentiate the destination and add value to its product and service range (Gnoth, 2003).

Within this context, tourism marketing has flourished. This applies to any service supplier, whether in the field of transport, accommodation, restaurants, or local recreational services, among others. Hence, each service supplier needs to take into account their own actions, launching campaigns to spur the profitable development of their activities in conjunction with the demands of clients seeking specific services, especially where such demands are not currently being nurtured (Cantallops, 2002).

However, as tourism marketing can be done at different levels simultaneously, a marketing campaign made only at the level of a small firm may return success, but even greater success depends to a large extent on campaigns covering either the regional or the national level; hence, the importance of national or regional governments and tourism operators in tourism marketing (Cantallops, 2002). Thus, if they are to continue participating in increasingly competitive global economic markets, actors representing tourism destinations should seek to ensure the attraction of new target market segments, all the while accounting for the costs involved, the potential profit, and the investments necessary, which may range from the improvement of infrastructures to the establishment of new attractions and events (Kotler et al., 1993).

According to Morgan, Pritchard and Piggott (2002), as the competition between destinations rises, destination branding is emerging as one of the most influential marketing instruments to convey the promise of a memorable travel experience.

Not all tourism consumers are necessarily interested in the same tourism destination, as its geographic, climatic, and historical-cultural features may or may not appeal to them. According to Kotler and others (1993), destinations have to identify their own natural target markets and grasp their respective needs, desires, and aspirations so that they may then develop programs that reach out to meet those needs. Such identification is only possible through two distinct approaches: by gathering information directly from consumers and by sounding out their opinions at attractions and events that exist at the destination so as to identify new target market segments interested in the existing product and service range, even though repeat consumers do not make up the entire universe of the tourism market.

## 2.2. Market segmentation in tourism

According to Paço and Raposo (2009), the market segmentation process includes the selection of a set of variables or characteristics used to assign individuals to homogeneous groups. The resulting segments are then easily defined by reference to such readily observable descriptive characteristics as geographic location or demographic characteristics. Difficulty in choosing the proper segmentation base or criteria stems from the fact that many segments cannot be detected in the market place in their original form.

Market segmentation can be applied by different units operating in the tourism industry (e.g. hotels, travel agencies, restaurants, cities) for determining the profile of their respective tourists. There are several benefits to market segmentation from the tourism destination point of view, including: specialization based on the needs of

particular groups of tourists, achieving a competitive advantage, focusing on the development of effective messages through communication channels appropriate to the targeted segment and on increasing overall tourist satisfaction by more properly meeting their needs (Dolnicar, 2008).

According to Middleton (2002), segmentation is thus defined as the process of dividing a total market, such as all visitors, or a market sector, such as holiday travel, into subgroups or segments for marketing management purposes. Its aim is to facilitate more cost-effective marketing through the formulation, promotion, and delivery of tourism products able to satisfy the identified needs of target groups.

The primary bases for segmentation in general include demography, geography, behavior, lifestyle, personality, and benefits sought. These same criteria also serve to segment tourism demand. With regard to tourist characteristics, sometimes the most relevant criteria are nationality and occupation, while from the tourism products perspective, the accommodation type is the most relevant element (Díaz-Pérez, Bethencourt-Cejas & Álvarez-González, 2005).

Regarding behavioral segmentation, motivations are among the most relevant segmentation variables. In travel, Fodness (1994) suggests five types of motivations: (1) knowledge, or cultural and educational motives, (2) reward maximization, or pleasure and sensation seeking, (3) self-esteem, (4) ego-enhancement or social prestige, and (5) punishment minimization, or the need to escape or stimulus-avoidance. Other authors (e.g. Dann, 1981) prefer to refer to push and pull factors as the explicative factors for travel motivations. Push factors are the internal drivers which motivate people to travel (e.g. the need to escape from one's routine, to relax, and to enhance one's self-esteem). Pull factors, which include the need for novelty, refer to the desire to go to famous destinations or discover new experiences. Push and pull factors are related to the tourist behaviors that drive their emotional needs. These emotional needs push

tourists to leisure and recreation, and pull them to destinations (Lee & Crompton, 1992).

Goeldner and Ritchie (2003), on the other hand, prefer to classify motivations according to the following typology: (i) physical, such as relaxation; (ii) cultural, such as discovering new geographical areas; (iii) interpersonal, such as socializing and meeting new people; and (iv) prestige, such as self-esteem and self-actualization.

Another criterion for tourism market segmentation is tourist expenditure. Various attempts have been made to segment the tourism market into different expenditure groups and to determine the characteristics of each group (e.g. Díaz-Pérez et al., 2005). Faced with a great variety of competing destinations, the traveler must eliminate some options owing to time and money constraints. Even so, the traveler is likely to choose the destination with the most favorable image (Gartner, 1989).

The image predicts the expectations that visitors/tourists have about the destination, and a positive image promises them a rewarding life experience. This consists of attaching “memorable events” to the offer in order to involve the consumer in the entire tourism experience (Pine & Gilmore, 1998). This way, tourism managers develop products keeping in mind, first of all, consumer satisfaction and building a unique brand image or identity differentiating their offer from competitors, which justifies the relevance of the image or “pre-experience” the tourist has about the expected experience at the destination (Manhasa, Manraib & Manraib, 2016). This experience branding helps to consolidate and strengthen the emotional link between the visitor and the destination, and to diminish consumer search costs and perceived risk (Blain, Levy & Ritchie, 2005). As such, marketers create marketing messages based on these experiences that will appeal to the emotions and rationales of potential visitors (Hudson & Ritchie, 2009).

Thus, in a state of intense competition among destinations and their frequently limited pro-

motional resources, marketers must identify the images held by visitors/tourists and select those segments that represent the most receptive target markets, that is, those travelers with more positive images as they are already the most predisposed to visit the area in question. The identification of such segments would allow the destination marketer to target those segments and further enhance the image to make the destination more favorable than other areas. This would consequently provide the guidance necessary for a very focused and cost-effective communication campaign (Leisen, 2001).

The numerous combinations that travelers may choose from in terms of destinations, accommodation, means of transport, services, and leisure activities have led to the introduction of a wide range of differentiated products tailored to different market segments. These tourism products are undergoing continual adaptation to new forms of demand arising as a result of the prevailing trend towards very diverse needs (González & Bello, 2002).

Based on this literature review, it can be concluded that segmentation in the tourism industry is now gaining an increasing level of relevance. With this in mind, we formulated the following research question:

*RQ: It is possible to identify several segments of visitors/tourists at Schist Village tourism destinations?*

### 3. THE SCHIST VILLAGE NETWORK

The strong migratory outflows that took place in Portugal in the 1960s and 1970s did not spare the inland Centro region: they contributed to the desertion and later abandonment of the traditions and wisdom of this inland region, accompanied by the steady deterioration of the economic and business environment. Small clusters of housing persisted even if some displayed advanced states of degradation. However, what still remained and served as the driver behind the launching of a brand to define this

territory, was the natural environmental and built heritage, the gastronomy, the wisdom and knowhow, the cultural identity and rural spirit, and the attitude of mutual help still persisting among the few inhabitants who remained. This was the context in which the Schist Village Network project first emerged in 2000 with a stated objective of not only preserving the cultural identity but also enabling the social and economic development of the region.

The Schist Village network represents a sustainable development project at a regional scale, spanning some 27 villages located in the inland Centro region of Portugal between Castelo Branco and Coimbra (more specifically, in the Pinhal Interior district). ADXTUR runs the network in partnership with some 21 municipalities and over 100 private-sector entities acting within the scope of the network. These small clusters aggregate the regional tourism potential reflected in the architecture, the environmental amenities, the gastronomy, and the traditions, among other distinctive cultural features of excellence. The bedrock for this region is mostly schist, from which the traditional houses were built, and hence the name Schist Village Network (ADXTUR, 2015).

The project strategy draws upon the ongoing internal relationships and the sharing of information between the diverse range of partners. However, as the basis of any business is its product, the companies participating aspire to develop different and better products so that the target market opts to purchase them while also paying a higher price (ADXTUR, 2009).

Since the official launch of the Schist Village brand in 2005, ADXTUR has defined it as the “umbrella brand” for the territory, embodying the identification of convergent objectives for different actors in the territory and aggregating everything into a range of skills and planning responsibilities. The objectives of the Schist Village network include the achievement of sustainable development through the participation of all local actors, and the nurturing and leveraging of the territory’s strengths beyond its

own scope, as reflected in the attraction of resources, the establishment of networks, and the encouragement of both entrepreneurship and popular involvement (ADXTUR, 2009).

Its mission and objectives integrate the preservation and promotion of the territory’s cultural landscape to enhance built architectonic heritage; the boosting of the socioeconomic framework; and the renovation, sharing, and dissemination of arts and crafts based on locally prevailing knowledge – all anchored in cooperation between the local authority and the public sector alongside the direct contribution of citizens and market research findings (ADXTUR, 2009).

The strategic vocation of the concept unquestionably depends on the tourism sector for its social label (i.e. the words and symbols visible in the services and products that seek to influence purchasing decisions through guaranteeing ethical and socially responsible production processes, a seal or logo indicating that a specific product or service complies with a particular set of social norms), thus establishing a point of reference within the scope of inland, nature-oriented and predominantly rural tourism, which is then supplemented by other forms of tourism such as cultural, adventure, and gastronomic tourism.

As a means of broadening the typology of the potential target audience and consequently boosting the number of visitors, attention has focused on the diversification of the product and service range, with cultural tourism aiming at more sedentary tourists and nature tourism attracting their more active peers.

#### 4. METHODOLOGY

This research seeks to grasp the motivations, behaviors, and images that consumers associate with the Schist Village tourism destination, as well as to carry out their segmentation. The model of analysis applied to study the behaviors of visitors/tourists contains a series of dependent variables (information about the destination, the activities available there, and its image)

and independent variables (visitor sociodemographic details). Therefore, based on the factors influencing the visit, it is possible to identify the visitors'/tourists' perceived image of the territory, their motivations, and the experiences they had and/or desired to have there.

The methodology chosen for this study is quantitative (questionnaire-based surveys), designed to ascertain the knowledge and the preferences of tourists visiting the Schist Villages and to collect profiles of visitors in both motivational and demographic terms. The market research analysis carried out after this phase then serves as an input into the development of strategies able to capture and ensure the loyalty of target audiences within the scope of a duly formalized marketing plan.

This study had a total duration of ten months, from October 2014 to the end of July 2015, with the surveys being conducted between May and July 2015. In terms of geographic scope, the study took place in the territory covered by the Schist Villages. The study unit of analysis was each visitor/tourist arriving at the Schist Villages who completed the questionnaire.

In cooperation with ADXTUR, the questionnaires were distributed and administered by partners in the Schist Village network. Copies were left in various commercial establishments, whose owners only had to inform visitors/tourists about its existence and request that they complete one. Given the low level of response from this approach, questionnaires were distributed, in parallel, through the personal intervention of the research team on the occasion of diverse events that took place in the area.

The questionnaires were printed in Portuguese, Spanish, and English and contained the following sections:

1. Information on the destination – familiarity with the destination, the place, and its surroundings; the length of stay; the motivations behind the visit; and the accommodation and expenditure incurred;
2. Information on the activities undertaken at the destination – participation in activities and events at the destination, and activities eliciting interest for possible future participation;
3. Information on respondents' experiences while at the destination – the image that the respondent retains of the destination following the tourism experience;
4. Personal information – personal (socio-demographic) data.

Following data collection, the information gathered was analyzed using the IBM *Statistical Package for the Social Sciences* (SPSS, version 22) software.

## 5. RESULTS

### 5.1. Sample characterization

The sample consisted of 223 completed questionnaires; out of that number, 164 respondents were Portuguese nationals and 59 were international visitors/tourists, respectively accounting for 73.5 % and 26.5 % of the total sample. More specifically, the non-Portuguese nationalities most strongly represented among the survey respondents who visited the Schist Villages were German (23.7 %), Spanish (20.3 %), and French (18.6 %).

Out of the total number of completed and analyzed questionnaires, males made up 58.7 % of the respondents and females accounted for the remaining 41.3 %. In terms of the respective age ranges among Schist Village visitors/tourists, there was a clear predominance of persons aged between 31 and 50 (42.6 %). Regarding the educational levels of visitors/tourists, the majority (54.3 %) reported having attained high school qualifications, followed by individuals with university-level education (28.7 %).

As regards the profile of visitors/tourists at Schist Village tourist destinations, the results indicate that the overwhelming majority (89.2 %) regularly travel on vacation. The respondents had

primarily learned of the Schist Villages through family members and/or friends (43.9 %), with the Internet (33.6 %) also proving significant as a source of information. Furthermore, 70.9 % of the respondents positively affirmed having sought out information about the Schist Villages, with almost half of these (47.5 %) having done so via the Internet. As for the type of accommodation chosen by these visitors/tourists, the most common option was a "hotel" (26.0 %), followed by "residential tourism" (14.3 %), "camping site" (13.5 %), and "rural tourism" (11.7 %). A share of 42.2% of respondents spent an average of between "51 and 200" euros on visits to Schist Villages (excluding travel costs).

When it comes to the tourism activities and products experienced, the data collected reveals "visits to built heritage" (71.7 %) as the most commonly reported activity of Schist Village visitors/tourists, followed by "gastronomy" (69.5 %). At least half of all individuals engaged in "visits to museums / interpretative centers," "visits to historical locations," and activities interrelated with "festivals/events, cultural and/or traditional".

## 5.2. Motives for visiting, interests and the destination image

From a list of possible motives for choosing the Schist Villages as a tourism destination, incorporating a five-point scale (ranging from 1 – "Not

at all important" to 5 – "Highly important"), the results demonstrate the average response returned to be mostly equal to or greater than 3 (Table 1).

Of the motives presented, the results give evidence of "natural heritage" and "tranquility" yielding the highest average results and should correspondingly be the focal point emphasized in the drafting of new media and communication strategies. The literature on these motivations conveys how Fodness (1994) frames them as "reward maximization or pleasure and sensation" whilst Dann (1981) considers the search for tranquility a push factor. On the other hand, the "geographic proximity" and "family destination" motives were found to be of the lowest importance as reasons for choosing the Schist Villages as a tourism destination; this demonstrates that visitors do not mind the travelling and, on occasion, willingly cover long distances to visit this isolated destination.

Subsequently, a list of activities ongoing in the Schist Villages was presented to respondents as set out in Table 2. In this case, they evaluated their interest in the activity on a scale of 1 to 5 (1 – "Not at all interesting" and 5 – "Highly interesting")

It was observed that, in general terms, all the activities included received positive evaluations from respondents. Thus, each destination must necessarily seek to provide its visitors with all of

TABLE 1: Motives for choosing the Schist Villages as a tourism destination

Motives	n	Min.	Max.	Med.	Mode	Stand. deviation
Natural heritage	218	1	5	4.41	5	0.71
Tranquility	221	2	5	4.37	4	0.65
Built heritage	217	1	5	4.01	4	0.77
Persons/preserved local identity	217	1	5	3.80	4	0.78
Good gastronomy	217	1	5	3.70	4	0.86
Local lifestyle	217	1	5	3.68	4	0.84
Events	219	1	5	3.02	3	0.98
Geographic proximity	219	1	5	2.99	3	1.36
Family destination	217	1	5	2.18	1	1.25

TABLE 2: Interest in Schist Village tourism activities and products

Activities	N	Min.	Max.	Med.	Mode	Stand. deviation
Visits to handicraft stores and workshops	216	1	5	4.06	4	0.85
Visits to built heritage	219	1	5	3.96	4	0.73
Visits to museums/interpretative centers	217	1	5	3.87	4	0.91
Visits to historical site	217	1	5	3.76	4	0.86
Gastronomy	220	1	5	3.67	4	0.87
Hiking/Sports/Adventure	217	1	5	3.66	4	1.02
Festivals, cultural and/or traditional events	218	1	5	3.29	3	0.94

them without exception, while placing greater emphasis on visits interrelated with handicrafts, heritage, and museums.

The survey also enabled an understanding of the image that visitors/tourists have of Schist Villages and their host territory (Table 3). Again, responses were provided on a five-point scale (ranging from 1 – “Totally disagree” to 5 – “Completely agree”).

average results of over four points. These facets deserve particular attention to prevent their failing to meet tourist expectations, as detailed by Leisen (2001).

After analysis of the data on the images held by Schist Village visitors/tourists, the authors then strove to analyze the level of agreement or disagreement between national and international visitors/tourists (Table 4).

TABLE 3: Visitor/tourist images of the Schist Villages

Image of Schist Villages	n	Min.	Max.	Med.	Mode	Stand. deviation
Are tranquil and relaxing	220	3	5	4.65	5	0.51
Have good landscapes	220	3	5	4.50	5	0.56
Have nice and welcoming people	220	3	5	4.26	4	0.63
Have many places of interest to visit	220	2	5	4.19	4	0.71
Have good food	220	2	5	4.08	4	0.71
Villages are clean	220	1	5	4.00	4	0.65
Have retained their authenticity	220	2	5	3.90	4	0.56
Have culture, history, and heritage	220	1	5	3.78	4	0.76
Have well-preserved heritage	220	2	5	3.64	3	0.72

Therefore, from a list of nine statements about the image of the Schist Villages as a tourist destination, results show complete agreement among most respondents on the two images – “are tranquil and relaxing” and “have good landscapes,” with averages of 4.65 and 4.50, respectively. The statements “have nice and welcoming people”, “have many places of interest to visit,” “have good food,” and “villages are clean” received high levels of agreement, with

In fact, the results show that the following statements regarding the image – being tranquil and relaxing, with welcoming and authentic people – obtained a high level of agreement between Portuguese and foreign visitors, without significant differences between the two groups. This is not the case with the remaining aspects, and the authors note that, in these particular cases, international arrivals hold a far more positive image. The perceived image of “having good

TABLE 4: t-Student test for national vs. international visitors/tourists (image perception)

Image of the Schist Villages		Levene's test		t test	
		F	Sig.	t	Sig.
Have good landscapes	PT (4.49) Other (4.49)	2.82	0.095	-0.073	0.942
Are tranquil and relaxing	PT (4.60) Other (4.78)	21.71	0.000	-2.411	<b>0.017</b>
Have many places of interest to visit	PT (4.22) Other (4.12)	1.75	0.187	0.951	0.342
Have culture, history and heritage	PT (3.81) Other (3.69)	4.82	0.029	1.061	0.290
Have well-preserved heritage	PT (3.68) Other (3.54)	6.78	0.010	1.252	0.213
Have retained their authenticity	PT (3.86) Other (4.00)	23.34	0.000	-2.015	<b>0.045</b>
Have good food	PT (4.10) Other (4.02)	5.52	0.020	1.052	0.295
Have nice and welcoming people	PT (4.19) Other (4.41)	0.010	0.922	-2.276	<b>0.024</b>
Villages are clean	PT (4.04) Other (3.88)	4.24	0.041	1.904	0.059

Note: Value means can be found within brackets “()”

landscapes” was highly evaluated by national and international tourists, achieving a value mean of 4.49 in both groups. The preservation of heritage was an image less associated to the Schist Villages (as well as having culture, history, and heritage) by both national and international tourists, which indicates that this aspect should be taken into account in the promotion of the place.

### 5.3. Visitor/tourist segments for Schist Village tourism destinations

The sample segment research used the SPSS “Direct Marketing” tool and, more specifically, the “Segmenting contacts into clusters” technique, in which each cluster thus identified corresponds to a segment of visitors/tourists.

This analytical procedure applied the TwoStep algorithm and returned a five-group segmentation for the sample with a high level of quality and identifying the relevant variables (hence,

those variables with a predictive value of greater than 0.5) to be the type of accommodation (in accordance with the study by Díaz-Pérez et al., 2005), (not) having engaged in gastronomy-related activities, and civil status. Therefore, since it is possible to identify several segments of visitors/tourists at Schist Village tourism destinations, our findings point to a positive answer to the research question initially formulated.

Segment 1 (31.1 %) accounts for approximately one-third of the sample and consists entirely of married persons or unmarried couples who have engaged in gastronomy-related activities. This segment includes a similar proportion of men and women, mostly between 51 and 65 years of age. Furthermore, almost one half of these persons opted to stay in rural tourism accommodation. Segment 2 accounts for 11.4 % of the sample, all of whom participated in gastronomic activities and local markets, with over a half being either married or unmarried couples (57.9 %) and staying in residential tourism

accommodation (63.2 %). As in the Segment 1, this group includes men and women aged between 51 and 65 and those in the 65+ age group. In turn, Segment 3 (31.1 %) consists almost entirely of individuals staying in hotels, either married or unmarried couples between 31 and 50 years' old who participated in gastronomic activities and traditional events (e.g. festivals, fairs, etc.). The individuals included in Segment 4 (10.8 %) mostly engaged in gastronomic activities (94.4 %), with almost one-half being single women (44.4 %) and one-half staying in the homes of family or friends during their visit to the Schist Villages. Finally, Segment 5 (16.2 %) includes those individuals (mostly men) who opted to stay at camping sites and engaged in some gastronomic activities, as well as in festivals and sports activities, with the overwhelming majority being single (81.5 %) and under the age of 30.

Taking into account the scale of the first and third clusters, which together include more than one-half of the sample, it is possible to note the predominance of persons who are either married or in *de facto* union relationships, who appreciate gastronomy and stay in hotels and rural tourism residences. ADXTUR should thus continue to target the development of specific products for this type of target, coming up with attractive tourist packages, given that these would seem to be the target groups that can bring the greatest added value to the territory. The media and advertising strategy should also reach out to these segment types, strengthening the most positive images valued by visitors/tourists, that is those of a calm and relaxing destination surrounded by very rich and striking landscapes.

## 6. CONCLUSIONS

The present study sought both to verify the existence of market segments and to ascertain the profiles of tourists visiting this area in order to be able to more effectively target such groups in the future. This also involved identifying the

existence of any similarities or differences in the perceptions of the image of the Schist Villages between Portuguese and international visitors/tourists.

In terms of recognition, the Schist Villages tourism destination is recognized similarly by national and international visitors/tourists. Considering all the images of the Schist Village destinations presented, our findings conclude that the images of "calm and relaxing," "nice and welcoming people," and "still authentic" are recognized in different and distinctive ways by Portuguese and international respondents.

The study also enabled the verification of the existence of various segments of visitors/tourists arriving at Schist Village tourist destinations. According to the analysis of the results obtained, there were five visitor/tourist segments present at this destination who, in the overall majority, engaged in gastronomy-related activities during their visits to the area and were characterized primarily by their marital status and choice of the type of accommodation. Another segment that might yield additional returns to the territory are the emigrants who normally visit this region in the summer and who, in addition to their own consumption patterns during their visits, also represent a core means of promoting the territory in their host countries, as well as contributing towards higher product sales through what is commonly referred to as the "nostalgia business."

In relation to the empirical study itself, it was subject to certain limitations. The first of these stems from how the data gathered and analyzed constitutes but a mere "moment" in a fairly vast and dynamic universe, given that the questionnaires were completed across a defined and fairly brief period of time. Regarding the process of data collection, it may be highlighted that the questionnaire completion period coincided with a period of better weather conditions and the beginning of the bathing season. It is characterized by large flows of groups with a greater interest in nature tourism and its more active forms, as opposed to those interested in

less active forms of tourism, such as cultural or gastronomic tourism. Similarly, the fact that the questionnaires were handed out by network partners effectively excluded from the study all those tourism consumers who travel and visit the territory without any direct recourse to the services of the aforementioned partners. Also, the questionnaires completed in the presence of researchers referred only to those events and

occasions taking place at the time when there was the opportunity to be in attendance.

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