

Motivations, involvement and place-attachment in surf tourism

CARLA SILVA * [csilva@estv.ipv.pt]

CLÁUDIA SEABRA ** [cseabra@estv.ipv.pt]

JOSÉ LUÍS ABRANTES *** [jlbrantes@estv.ipv.pt]

CLÁUDIA FAIAS **** [claudiafaias@uac.pt]

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Objectives | Tourism and sports are social phenomena, allowing people to meet and interact. Therefore, they can be an instrument of social and cultural change (Rifai, 2010), receiving great attention from the academic world. Over the last forty years, surf tourism has become a significant part of both, tourism and sports, and particularly part of the adventure tourism industry (Fluker, 2003). "Surf tourism involves people travelling to either domestic locations for a period of time not exceeding six months, or international locations for a period of time not exceeding twelve months, who stay at least one night, and where the active participation in the sport of surfing, where the surfer relies on the power of the wave for forward momentum, is the primary motivation for destination selection" (Fluker, 2003, p. 7).

Surf tourism is a new tourism product that improves tourism development in many destinations (Buckley, 2002), being Portugal one of those. In fact, there are many Portuguese surf spots in conditions to become worldwide top destinations for surf, making Portugal as a brand for surf.

This study is a working project on motivations, involvement and place-attachment to surf tourism. The main goal is to analyse the motivations and involvement with surf tourism practice and also the place-attachment that surfers can build with the surf spots.

Methodology | From the literature review, it is accepted that motivation is multi-dimensional. Tourists seek to satisfy a number of distinct needs simultaneously (Baloglu & Uysal, 1996). The motivation variables considered for the survey instrument construction were chosen based on pre-established scales related to tourism motivation and surf tourism constructs. A five-point Likert-type scale will be used as the response format for the motivation variables (ranging from 1 – 'not important at all' – to 5 – 'extremely important').

The conceptual model considers push and pull motivations in eight dimensions: (1) surfing appeal, (2) access and infrastructures, (3) knowledge and learning, (4) social, (5) leisure, (6) prestige, (7) sport and (8) adventure.

* **PhD in Tourism** from the University of Aveiro. **Adjunct Professor** at the School of Technology and Management of the Polytechnic Institute of Viseu.

** **PhD in Tourism** from the University of Aveiro. **Adjunct Professor** at the School of Technology and Management of the Polytechnic Institute of Viseu.

*** **PhD in Economics and Business Sciences** from the University of Salamanca (Spain). **Coordinator Professor** at the School of Technology and Management of the Polytechnic Institute of Viseu.

**** **MSc in Strategic Management and Tourism Development** from the University of Azores. Invited Lecturer at the University of Azores and General Director of Operations of the hotel group Ciprotur.

Involvement in tourism is the unobserved state of motivation, interest and excitement for a recreational activity or associated product. Involvement refers, in short, to what tourists think about the leisure and recreation, which affect their behaviors (Havitz & Dimanche, 1997). Involvement influences the degree of commitment in which consumers are committed in different aspects of the process of consumption: product, demand for information, decision making and the purchase (Broderick & Mueller, 1999; Zaichkowsky, 1985). This construct was considered in four different facets:

- involvement in pre-purchase or with the generic product;
- involvement with the decision to purchase the product;
- involvement with the product's consumption;
- involvement in product evaluation or post-purchase.

Place-attachment is an emotional connection to a particular environment (Low & Altman, 1992; Hidalgo & Hernández, 2001), an emotional investment to a place (Hummon, 1992), or as a way in which individuals value and identify themselves with a particular place (Moore & Graefe, 1994). Place-attachment is a multidimensional construct that incorporates two dimensions (Brown & Raymond, 2007). Place-identity that represents the functional dimension and place-dependence the emotional or symbolic one (Kyle, Graefe, Manning & Bacon, 2003, 2004a, 2004b; Moore & Scott, 2003; Yuksel, Yuksel & Bilim, 2010). These two dimensions will be measured with a five-point Likert-type scale (1='completely disagree'; 5='completely agree').

The study will take place in four prestigious surf spots: Nazareth, Peniche, Ericeira and Azores. Despite the fact that all these surf spots are located in Portugal, they are internationally recognized as important and prestigious places to surf. The validation of the proposed model will be achieved through four procedures of analysis. Firstly, a descriptive data analysis will be undertaken with univariate and bivariate analysis, taking into account statistical indicators. The second procedure corresponds to exploratory factor analysis (EFA), aiming at determining the relationship between the observed variables and latent variables. Thirdly, once defined the variables that represent each factor and the number of factors, a confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) will be applied using full-information maximum likelihood (FIML) estimation procedures in LISREL (Jöreskog & Sörbom, 1993). Finally, measures will be tested to measure the relationship among constructs theoretically related (cf. Churchill, 1995). In this sense, the analysis and data processing will be performed using the programs SPSS and LISREL, in their latest versions.

Main Results and Contributions | The results will be focused on push and/or pull motivations and involvement to surf tourism and also on place-attachment to the surf tourism destination spots. Since the tourism destinations should promote their own differentiating and unique features, the final discussion will be focused on theoretical and practical implications of this study results to surf tourism destinations planning, marketing and management. The results may allow surf destinations to implement effective positioning strategies, increase market segmentation options, enhance product development and communication strategies, and generally improve marketing-mix strategies, particularly concerning the development of an effective surf spot brand.

Limitations | From a theoretical standpoint, despite the extensive literature review, the study might omit and therefore not consider other tourism motivation, involvement or place-attachment dimensions. From a methodological perspective, this study, like any empirical research work, has certain limitations which could affect the evaluation and generalization of its results. The ideal would be the application of this conceptual model as measurement instrument to all surf spots destinations, which is almost impossible. In any case, the replication of this study and corresponding extension of the model to other surf spots destinations would be more interesting for a more general validation. On the other hand, tourism and all related constructs are dynamic concepts. Therefore it would seem desirable to carry out longitudinal studies that deal with the process of surf tourism motivations, involvement and place-attachment changes over longer time periods.

Conclusions | The purpose of this work is to determine which are the main motivations and involvement that move tourists to surf tourism practice and also the connection that this kind of tourists establish with surf destinations. Surf tourism is of major importance to the tourism industry (Dolnicar & Fluker, 2003). Since there is not much research on this market, this study intends to deepen the understanding on the concept of surf tourism. On the other hand, motivations, involvement and place-attachment are important dimensions in tourism research.

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