

# Analysis of **consumer behavior** in **residential tourism**: The case study of the Beaches of Barra and Costa Nova in Portugal

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**Keywords** | Residential tourism, Second home, Destinations marketing, Motivations, Consumer behavior.

**Objectives** | The present paper mainly aims at enhancing our understanding of the phenomenon of residential tourism, its roots in tourist market trends and possible implications on sustainable destination management and marketing. The presented study looks particularly at the expansion of secondary homes in a coastal region of Central Portugal, specifically in terms of the market's profile, motivations, behaviors, attitudes and destination image. Finally, it is discussed how this information may be useful for more successful and sustainable destination marketing.

**Methodology** | After an integrated literature review on residential tourism, consumer behavior and sustainable destination marketing, the primary data was collected by means of a survey of visitors of the beaches of Barra and Costa Nova, in Portugal's central region.

**Main results and contributions** | The results obtained from the analysis of the responses permitted an exploratory understanding of the market's profile, attitudes and behaviors, especially revealing the attributes that residential tourists most appreciate at a destination. These attributes were mainly the security, the quality of life and the attractiveness of the place. Some suggestions were also given with the purpose of a better exploration of the residential tourism market, which has a great potential for development in the region. Among these suggestions were the investment in bike paths, tennis courts and beach activities during the summer months (e.g. fitness classes), as well as the development of activities at different times of the year, allowing a better use of second homes by the owners.

**Limitations** | The study is limited to the case study approach presented at a particular beach area in the Central Region of Portugal. It is further limited through its exploratory nature, not guaranteeing representativeness of the sample, based on

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only 102 responses, obtained during the summer months of 2009, although the direct administration approach increases our confidence in the validity of the data. The reality may, however, have changed in the meantime, also due to changes in the destination area, as well as in its market, probably affected by the ongoing financial crises in the country. Ongoing research and similar studies in other beach areas of the Portuguese coast in the north and central regions would probably permit a better understanding of the phenomenon of residential beach tourism at the country's Atlantic coast, north of the capital. In these places, the climate tends to be harsher than in the south and beach tourism may be of a different kind, as may be the tourists and their motivations/ preferences regarding the choice of a second home destination.

**Conclusions** | Understanding the process of integrated tourism destination marketing, especially in a strategic perspective, based on a deep understanding of the consumer and the destination, can be helpful for a more efficient and effective destination planning and management. In this context, the present study discusses the survey results also in light of a destination marketing that enhances sustainable destination development, particularly of the beach destination areas in Central Portugal, with particular emphasis on the specificity of second homes and the desires of their owners.