

Chapter 11

The Influence of Tourist Characteristics on the Perceived Quality of Hostels in Portugal: An Exploratory Study

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ABSTRACT

The hostels sector in Portugal, despite its late appearance compared to other countries in the world, has registered an expressive development. However, the observed growth is not properly accompanied by research that supports and helps in understanding the sector and its future perspective. The chapter intends to be a contribution in this area, having as central focus the analysis of the influence of

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the characteristics of the tourists in relation to the expectations and perceptions regarding the service quality provided in a hostel in Portugal. The methodology used is a descriptive nature of a quantitative nature, based on an online questionnaire survey. The questionnaire essentially applies the SERVQUAL model, not fully following the original structure, presenting reformulated statements that are adequate to the hostel service in dimensions such as tangible aspects, reliability, empathy, promptness, and security.

INTRODUCTION

Hostels represent a segment with increasing importance in the hospitality market, with approximately 20% of all global tourism, being attributed to the youth and student market (Hecht & Martin, 2006). However, although this type of accommodation is part of the tourism system, it has characteristics that differentiate it from this model, representing an alternative means of accommodation to traditional hotels (Thomazi, 2019). As basic characteristics, components related to prices, structures, interaction and sharing of socio-cultural experiences and values between guests are assumed (Mané & Ferreira, 2017).

The issues related to hospitality reveal themselves to be increasingly global, subordinate to the evolution of populations, which change characteristics over time. Thus, the service provided has come to be seen as a need to be met, and not as a luxury item (Kadampully & Suhartanto, 2003). Hospitality is the aspect of the tourism industry charged with improving the quality of services provided during the stay of tourists from a destination (Brotherton, 1999). In this sense, the study of tourist accommodation is of particular importance, given the fact that it plays an elementary role in shaping the perception of the tourist experience and, consequently, in tourist satisfaction (Saraiva, 2013). However, there is a diversification of components in the hostels' public, causing the perceived quality to be influenced by issues such as the characteristics and culture of tourists, making the process of assessing the quality of services of this type of accommodation difficult (Gameiro, 2013). The concept of perceived value has recently gained and popular in the business environment. Perceived value has an effect on consumer behavior and provides strategic implications for the success of companies. According to Permatasari (2020), a perceived value defined as the benefits of customers believe, what are they receive relative to the costs associated with the consumptions. For a service organization, it is important to know how their services are perceived by their customers. Customer Perceived

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