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## Stakeholder Perceptions of Religious Tourism and Local Development: Evidence from Lamego (Portugal) historic town

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# Stakeholder Perceptions of Religious Tourism and Local Development: Evidence from Lamego (Portugal) historic town

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The purpose of this study is to explore the views of different stakeholder groups (visitors, residents and local agents - heritage managers, tour operators, local authorities, Priests and head of the Church, directors of institutions linked to tourism) about the relationship between religion and tourism in a historic town setting. The main purpose is to examine the opinions/views/perceptions of different stakeholder groups about religious tourism and local development.

A mixed methodological (quantitative and qualitative) approach was used in order to analyse the perceptions and opinions of three stakeholders groups. The opinions of visitors (120) and residents (150) were analysed using a quantitative methodology. Univariate and bivariate analysis were used as techniques of data analysis. In the study of the remaining stakeholder group (local agents) a qualitative research method (individual interviews) was used for data collection. In total, 19 in-depth interviews were conducted and content analysis was performed.

The potential of this historic town for religious tourism was broadly supported by all the groups surveyed. Initiatives that take advantage of this potential to develop territories need intervention capacities that maintain a balance between political, economic and religious sensitivities. In this sense, agents and actors responsible for the development of tourism should work, in a coordinated and strategic manner on issues such as communication, networking, trust of the residents and their inclusion / involvement in all plans of action, benchmarking, and infrastructures. Specifically, it is important that stakeholders are encouraged to participate in tourism development processes at this location, especially with regard to religious tourism.

This study highlights the importance of analysing the visions and perceptions of the various stakeholder groups in the whole process of tourism development in general and in the development of religious tourism in particular.

**Key Words:** stakeholders, religious tourism, local development, tourism impacts, historic town

## Introduction

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Considering tourism as a vehicle for development (Sharpley, 2003), it is a relevant source of income for multiple sectors of economic activity, and also makes an important contribution to the development of regions (Nastase *et al.*, 2010). Tourism is a dynamic agent of change and many individuals and organisations large and small are affected.

Tourism is an important sector in the development of a region, and Religious Tourism (RT) is one of the most dynamic tourism segments in the world (Hitrec, 2010), often being seen as a motor for local development. Tourism and religion have long been traveling together, with religion being one of the oldest motivations identified in travel behaviour (O'Gorman, 2010 in Wiltshier and Clarke, 2012). The increasing importance of RT as an economic activity and mass movement has attracted a growing attention from researchers (Prazeres, 2014). It is one of the most significant types of tourism in the world, in volume and prevalence (Timothy and Olsen, 2006).

This type of tourism has great economic potential and, in certain cases, contributes significantly to local and regional development (Irimiás and Michalkó, 2013). This type of tourism has the potential to benefit more peripheral regions, rural or traditional, in which religion still plays an important role, and can boost regional development (Simone-Charteris and Boyd, 2010). However, the authors argue that the development of RT can harm local communities especially when the cultural and social texture of host communities is already fragile. Thus, for the authors one of the major challenges associated with the development of RT lies in the different interests of the various stakeholders regarding the way religious sites are conserved, managed and consumed by religious and secular tourists.

The problem to be investigated in this study relates to the understanding of various stakeholder perceptions about the relationship between religion and tourism in a historic town setting. The main purpose is to examine the opinions / views / perceptions of different stakeholder groups about RT and its implications for local development. Three stakeholder groups were chosen - visitors, residents, and local agents (for example, heritage managers, tour operators, local authorities, Priest and head of the Church and directors of institutions linked to tourism).

Specifically, the following objectives were established for each group. In the case of the study of the visitors, we intent to characterise the profile of the tourist and/ or visitor (in terms of product consumed, tourist experience and demographic variables) and determine the weight of the religious motivation in the visit. In the case of the residents study, the specific objective is to know the perceptions of residents on several general tourism aspects (for example, community attachment, perceived impacts of tourism, trust in public agents, economic dependence) and, predominantly their

visions about some specific RT factors (potential, flow and future importance). Finally, with regard to the study of the local agents group, we intent to know their perceptions regarding several relevant aspects related to the RT and the RT contribution to the local development.

This study examines a small historic town in northern Portugal (Lamego town) located within the Douro World Heritage Site. This choice is related to the patrimonial value that this town holds, since its resources can represent a great opportunity for the tourist growth of this historical town.

This paper is divided into five sections. After the introduction, the second section briefly reviews the literature on this research. The methodology used for empirical purposes is described in the third section. The fourth section presents the empirical findings and the final section provides the conclusions and implications of this research.

## Brief literature review

### *Stakeholder analysis*

In the field of tourism and studies on the impacts of tourism, stakeholder identification and analysis has become of crucial importance. Since tourism is a complex activity, it will involve a diverse set of agents and institutions, which are influenced by the gains that result from it as well as by the costs involved.

A stakeholder, from Freeman's point of view (1984, p. 46) can be defined as 'any identifiable group or individual that can affect or is affected by the goals of an organisation'.

It is a word widely used in the areas of communication, administration and information technology whose objective is to designate the most important people and groups for a strategic planning or business plan, that is, the interested parties. According to stakeholder theory, the various stakeholders have a direct influence on decision-making related to management (Presenza and Cipollina, 2010).

In the tourism context, this theory makes it possible to describe the various elements of a particular tourist destination, for example, the various agents involved in the sector and the links between the agents of the tourism system (Byrd, 2007). According to Sautter and Leisen (1999), tourism stakeholders aggregate all those involved in this sector, including companies located in

tourist destinations, competitors, business chains, workers, residents of destinations, tourists, government and groups of activists.

The need to engage stakeholders in the tourism planning process is widely recognised (Bramwell and Lane, 2000). To do this, their interests must be identified by those responsible for this planning, so that stakeholders can participate in the formulation and implementation of the measures to be taken (Country, 2013).

Collaboration among the various stakeholders can provide many benefits and may encourage further reflection on the economic, social and environmental consequences of tourism development (Bramwell and Sharman, 1999).

Considering primary and secondary stakeholders can influence the way RT should or should not develop local territories, it becomes necessary to analyse the perceptions of various stakeholders groups in the tourism development process, so that this becomes successful.

### ***Religious tourism and its implications to the development of the territories***

Tourism is a comprehensive activity and it can be segmented into more specific types, being RT one of this types (Silva and Junior, 2016). Both among academics and within organisations a lot of discussion has been made about the definition of RT (Griffin and Raj, 2017). For the authors, this is a form of tourism derived from the faith/set of beliefs, regardless of the terminology used in the various definitions. Frequently RT is recognised as a modern form of pilgrimage tourism (Rinschede, 1992). This type of tourism can be described as 'special tourist activity orientated by religious culture, with the help of specific eco-cultural environment, and it refers to such special tourist activities as worshipping, research, sightseeing and culture carried out by religious followers and lay tourists' (Mu *et al.*, 2007: 101). It is also seen as a form of heritage tourism (Jackson and Hudman, 1995), or as a form of cultural tourism (Singh, 2004).

In order to broaden the definition of RT beyond individual motivations, Santos (2011) emphasises that the practice of RT encompasses the performance of a set of activities during the visit, such as pilgrimages, processions, visit to places considered 'holy' (shrines, temples, churches, etc.), participation in festivals of patron saints, spiritual retreats, seminars and other

events that emphasise the religiosity and culture in the tourism destinations. In this case, participants involved in such activities visit many of the typical places of pilgrimage, but the purpose of the visit may in some cases have nothing to do with religion.

In order for tourism to be a tool for local development, it is important that different regions strive to create innovative and diversified tourist products and services, as well as strengthening strategic partnerships and investment in tourism, environmental balance and the enhancement of cultural heritage (Reis, 2012). This effort must be made through appropriate strategies, in which the essential role of territorial actors is emphasised. In Reis's view (2012, p. 156), local development is a source of hope for regions of the interior that go through the process of depopulation. For the author, tourism, by taking advantage of the region's own resources, is 'an important development factor, depending on the specificities of each region and of the greater or lesser importance attributed to it'.

The tourism literature lists a set of arguments that highlight the contribution of tourism to local development, its employment creation effects, investment in local businesses, infrastructure development (UNTWO, 2011), revitalisation of cultural traditions, environmental protection, etc. Many effects result from tourism activity, which can be positive or negative, direct or indirect, economic, socio-cultural or environmental (Pedrana, 2013). According to the author, the relationship between territory and tourism has to be strong, nevertheless, this relationship is different according to the different stages of the tourism development.

Tourism, and within this the RT, plays a significant role in the enhancement of the local economy. According to Pinto (2011, p.27), 'Religious Tourism is a type of tourism that influences the local economic and environmental development. It is responsible for improving the quality of life of the local population, for the increase of jobs, as well as for the valorisation of the cultural heritage, mainly of a religious nature, so that they can be sustained in time and space'.

Previous studies have shown that religion can bring a large number of visitors and thus improve local infrastructures and economy (Eade, 1992). In the study conducted by Cerutti and Piva (2015), which focused on small-scale religious events, the authors demonstrated how religious events play an important role in promoting and developing a territory that actively involves local stakeholders in decision-making



**Table 1: Specific objectives and research questions**

Stakeholders	Specific objectives	Research questions
Visitors	Characterise the profile of the tourist and/or visitor (in terms of product consumed, tourist experience and demographic variables) Determine the weight of religious motivation in the visit Determine the potential of the town as a religious tourist destination	What is the profile of the tourist and/or visitor of the town of Lamego? What is the weight of religious motivation on the visit? What is the perception of visitors about the potential of the town as a religious tourist destination?
Residents	Analyse the attachment that residents have with the community	Are residents attached to the community?
	Know the support that residents give to the development of tourism	What is the support given by residents to the development of tourism?
	Determine the impacts of tourism	What are the impacts of tourism?
	Understanding the degree of trust in local public institutions	Do residents trust local public institutions?
	Analyse the degree of tourist dependence	Are residents dependent on tourism?
	Determine the opinion on the potential of the RT	What is the potential of Lamego for the development of the RT segment?
Others Stakeholders (local agentes) *	Identify the meaning of RT	What is the meaning of the term RT?
	Assess the potential of the town of Lamego to be promoted as a RT destination	What is the potential of Lamego for the development of the RT segment?
	To analyse the importance of RT in terms of attracting visitors to the town of Lamego and impacts on the community	How important is RT?
	Analyse the RT's contribution to the development of the local economy	What is the RT's contribution to local development?
	Understand the role played by the various stakeholders (public tourist entities, private tourism organisations and other institutions) in the development and promotion of RT	What role do different stakeholders play in the RT?
	To know proposals for the development of RT	What actions can be proposed for the development of RT?

\*For example: Local political leaders; Heritage managers; Directors of institutions linked to tourism; Hotel managers, restaurant owners, cafes, bars, and souvenir shops; Tour operators and other private entities.

Source: Authors' own elaboration

processes. The authors conclude that it is essential to emphasise a structured management framework in order to produce positive effects for the local system.

### Specific objectives and methodology

*Objectives and research questions:* As already mentioned, this work falls within the context of historical towns in a perspective of stakeholder analysis and their perceptions on RT and local development. The main purpose is to examine the opinions/views/perceptions of different stakeholders groups about RT and its implications on local development. The following table contains the specific objectives and research questions for each stakeholder group.

*Context under study:* The historical town of Lamego was chosen as object of study. The town of Lamego is

located in the Portuguese Douro Valley World Heritage Site. This town has about 12 214 inhabitants in an area of 20.20 km divided into two parishes (INE, 2012). The local economy is mainly dependent on services, small businesses and agriculture.

It is one of the oldest towns in Portugal, and has several historic heritage representative of different historical phases (Vieira, 2014). It presents a diversity of products and considerable resources, as well as attractiveness (Sousa and Pinheiro, 2014). The patrimonial resources that this town managed to maintain throughout the centuries give it the possibility of positioning itself as a historical-heritage destination (Vieira, 2014), of a strong religious character: the chapel of S. Pedro Balsemão (10th century), the Castle (10th century), the Cistern (10th century), the Cathedral (12th century), the church of Santa Maria Maior de Almacave (12th-13th centuries) are important

monuments of national heritage. One of the most visited monuments is the Sanctuary of Nossa Senhora dos Remédios (18th century).

Concerning the religious celebrations we can highlight the festivities in honor of the patroness, Nossa Senhora dos Remédios (known as 'The Pilgrimage of Portugal'). This festivities are one of the largest in Portugal, bringing many people from all over the country and across borders (Sousa and Pinheiro, 2014). According to the authors, it is a celebration that preserves the memories and traditions of people who venerates the Nossa Senhora dos Remédios; however, in addition to the religious component, there is a strong attraction complement associated to the activities that offer visitors/tourists a set of leisure services related to the profane world (gastronomy, wine, music, local crafts, etc.). The existing celebrations in the town offer very particular conditions for the practice of RT, in which tourists/visitors can 'experience identity and popular culture through the enhancement of the profane and religiousness' (Sousa and Pinheiro, 2014).

*Type of study, participants and methods of data collection and analysis:* A mixed methodological (quantitative and qualitative) approach was used in order to analyse the perceptions and opinions of three stakeholders groups - tourists; residents; local agents.

The opinions of visitors and residents were analysed using a quantitative methodology. The sample was selected by convenience sampling methods. The selection of the sampling method used is justified by the temporal and financial constraints for this study, as well as the specific characteristics of the populations

under analysis (visitors and local community) and the difficulty of knowing, in the case of visitors, the population dimension. In the two studies, the most suitable methodological technique for collecting data was the questionnaire survey, which was implemented in a personal way.

In the questionnaire addressed to visitors, respondents were asked to answer a set of questions that, in addition to sociodemographic data, collected information about the visitor's profile about the product consumed, the evaluation of the heritage, the management and tourist experience, and the potential of the town as a RT destination. The preparation of the questionnaire and the choice of these variables of analysis were preceded by the consultation of other questionnaires carried out in the same context, which served as support for the elaboration of some questions, always trying to adapt them to the specific case to be analysed. In Lamego's visitors study, 120 completed questionnaires were collected.

The survey of Lamego's local community investigates resident's perceptions about some general tourism development variables (that may have some predictive capacity when investigating the residents support for tourism development) and also some RT specific variables (potential, flow and future importance). A total of 150 completed questionnaires were collected.

In both studies, for the analysis of the collected data, we used the statistical program SPSS (Statistical Package for Social Sciences) version 22. The data were treated through the use of simple and univariate statistical procedures, such as the frequency

**Table 2: Summary table of the main aspects of the two studies**

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	Visitors	Residents
Scenario of interest	Tourism sector	
Universe / Population	Visitors to the historic town of Lamego	Residents to the historic town of Lamego
Geographical scope	Regional (northern region)	
Sampling method	Non-probabilistic sampling method (convenience sample)	
Data collection method	Questionnaire survey (personal interview)	
Respondents	Valid answers 120	Valid answers 150
Techniques of data analysis	Univariate and bivariate statistical procedures	
Source: Author elaboration		

distribution tables (absolute and relative) and the calculation of means and standard deviations. In order to verify the existence of dependency relations, bivariate analysis was used.

We present below a summary of the main aspects of the two studies carried out for visitors and residents (Table 2).

In the study of the remaining stakeholder group (local agents) a qualitative research method (individual interviews) was used for data collection. In-depth personal interviews were conducted with different stakeholders, characterised as key informants. Several local agents, with a different profile, were considered: Local political leaders; Heritage managers; Directors of institutions linked to tourism; Hotel managers, restaurant, cafes, bars, and souvenir shops owners; Tour operators and other private entities. The identification of these local agents was made taking into account the intention of being able to represent the essential about the relationship between tourism and religion (RT) of the historical town of Lamego, aiming to capture their perceptions and opinions regarding the context in which they are inserted.

We use a semi-structured interview guide as to analyse their perceptions and opinions. Interview questions were developed based on key themes and were divided into six main dimensions (categories): 1) RT concept; 2) Potential of the town to be promoted as a RT destination; 3) The importance of RT in terms of attracting visitors to the town of Lamego and impacts on the resident community; 4) RT's contribution to the development of the local economy; 5) The role played by the various stakeholders (public tourist entities, private tourism organisations and other institutions) in the development and promotion of RT; and 6) Proposals for the development of RT. In total, 19 in-depth interviews were conducted.

We carried out a qualitative analysis of the interviews considering the previously established categories/dimensions, which enabled homogeneity and a guideline for the answers of the groups of stakeholders under analysis. The categories were chosen from the literature related to RT and local development based on stakeholder theory. These dimensions/categories are a focus of research, linking to the conceptual approach adopted, as well as to the issues arising from the problem to be studied and the reality under investigation. Data analysis was supported by the use of NVivo software 11.0.

## The different views of the stakeholders

### *Main results from the study carried out with visitors*

The result from the study carried out with visitors has provided better knowledge regarding the latter on many levels. Taking into account the methodological approach developed in the scope of this empirical study, we intend, at this point, to carry out an analysis of the answers to know the profile of the visitor of the town of Lamego in terms of the product consumed and their evaluation of the heritage, the management and the tourist experience, as well as socio-demographic characterisation and the type of trip. A specifically directed question was also set to assess the town's potential for promotion as a religious tourist destination.

*Social and demographic profile/type of trip:* We have observed that visitors, mainly men (57%) are between the ages of 21 and 78. 60.8% are Portuguese, mostly from the two major Portuguese towns, and have arrived in Lamego driving their own vehicle. The remaining visitors (28.9%) are from 15 nationalities, out of which most are German and French.

Approximately 83% of respondents carry out their own travel arrangements and do not use travel agencies or tourist/religious associations for this purpose. Of the 120 visitors who answered the questionnaire, only 34 reported spending in the town. Of those who reported having spent, the highest percentage was the food & beverage, with 53.3% followed by local products purchases (28.3%).

Whatever their nationality, most visitors (65%) have completed a higher education and work (only 22.5% of the visitors who answered the questionnaire are retired). Regarding income, two percentiles stand out from the others, which are the last group (> 3001 euros), with 24.7% and the intermediate group (1001-1500 euros), also with 24.7%.

*Consumed product* (Table 3): 50.8% of respondents had never visited the town before. More than 60% know the main religious monument of the town - the sanctuary of Nossa Senhora dos Remédios.

In order to plan the visit to the town, the knowledge obtained from the internet (25.8%), recommendation from friends and family, previous visit and guides and scripts (25% each) correspond to the main sources of information used.



**Table 3: Main motivations and information sources**

Familiarity with destiny	Had already visited the town (Repeat visit) (49.2%); First visit (50.8%).
Information source used in planning the visit*	Recommendation from friends and family (25%); Previous visit (25%); Internet (25.8%); Guides and Tourist Scripts (25%); Tour Operator/Tourist office /Hotel (10.8%); Other sources (7.5%);
Reasons to visit	Religious celebrations (2.5%); Pilgrimage/faith (5.8%); Tour (10%); Holidays (50.8%); Cultural tourism (24.2%), Visit friends and family (13.3%); Nature and landscape (26.7%); Other reasons (5%)
* Multiple answers	
Source: Authors' own elaboration	

The question that sought to ascertain the reasons for visiting the region showed three major groups of pretexts that are related to holidays (50.8%), nature and landscape (26.7%) and cultural tourism (24.2%). Reasons associated with religious issues (pilgrimage/faith and religious holidays/celebrations) were noted by 8.3% of visitors. Only 5% of respondents pointed out other reasons to visit the town, and the reasons given relate to personal and professional issues. Unlike what we would expect, not many found religion/pilgrimage to be important reason to the visit.

*Heritage, management and tourist experience assessment* (Table 4): The respondents reported having visited several places of interest in Lamego, highlighting the Sanctuary and the Cathedral. The activities carried out are related to visiting churches/religious monuments, visiting cultural heritage and

observing the landscape. In general, they are very satisfied with their visit, emphasizing that they are satisfied/very satisfied with the accessibility, the conservation of the monuments and with the parking available.

The overall evaluation of the experience with the visit to the town was good/very good. Most visitors are excursionists (they stay between 1 to 4 hours). In terms of loyalty indicators, there are favourable opinions regarding the return intention and recommendation of the visit.

With regard to the potential for promotion as a religious tourist destination, there is a strong perception of the potential in Lamego for this potential, and it is justified that this potential is associated with the notoriety of the two main monuments (Sanctuary

**Table 4: Evaluation of the tourist experience (main factors)**

Visited monuments*	Sanctuary (86.7%), Cathedral (52.5%), Castle (31.7%) and Museum (29.2%).
Activities carried out during the visit*	Visiting churches/religious monuments (84.2%); Observe the landscape (81.7%); Visit the cultural heritage (66.7%); Try the gastronomy (58.3%); Shopping (19.2%)
Visit satisfaction level*	Satisfied/very satisfied: Religious events (28.4%); Conservation of monuments (76.7%); Accessibilities (80%); Signaling (65.8%); Tourist accommodation (30.8%); Food & Beverage (54.1%); Parking (69.1%); Information available (55.9%); Hospitality (83.3%).
Length of stay (Average duration of stay) (hours and days) (n=78 and 39)	Until 4 hours (73.1%); between 5 a 8 hours (24.4%), between 9 and 12 hours (2.5%) Until 3 days (79.5%), More than 4 days (20.5% respondents)
Intention to return	Yes (60.8%), Maybe (25.8%), No (10%), I do not know / do not answer (3.3%)
Visit recommendation	Yes (96%), I do not know/do not answer (4%)
Global experience	Good (57.5%) e Very good (34.2%) Reasonable (5.8%) Bad (0.8%) e Very bad (1.7%)
Potential for promotion as a religious tourist destination	Yes (85%); No (1%); I do not know/do not answer (14%)
* Multiple answers	
Source: Authors' own elaboration	

and Cathedral), as well as with the richness of religious and cultural heritage it has.

### *Main results from the study carried out with residents*

Residents are the second stakeholders group analysed. In this study, we intend to know the perceptions of the residents about some general factors associated with tourism development (their community attachment, the support they give to tourism development, their evaluation of the impacts that tourism has had on the town, the degree of confidence in local public agents, the degree of dependence on tourism), and some specific aspects related to RT (RT destination promotion potential; opinion on the current flow of the RT and importance that the RT will play in the future).

The main characteristics of the residents sample are as follows: the majority of respondents (52.7%) are female, married (47.3%), living in Lamego, and aged between 18 and 81 years ( $M = 38.1$ ;  $SD = 14.6$ ); 57.4% have secondary education; The mean residence time in the town is 28.5 years ( $SD = 16.8$ ), ranging from 1 to 79 years. As regards the monthly income, 60.3% have an income lower than 1500 euros. As for the situation with regard to work, it should be noted that 64.7% of the residents are employed, against 11.3% of the unemployed. The descriptive results are presented below.

It is clear from residents' responses that, even if they do not depend directly on the tourism industry (their incomes are not related to tourism), they support

**Table 5: Descriptive analysis (general tourism questions) (average values)**

<b>Community attachment*</b>	Community attachment scale (Lee, 2013; 11 items, for example: 'I prefer living in this community over other communities'; 'I feel that this community is a part of me'). This scale obtained an overall mean value of 3.45, that is, it is between position 3 (neither agree nor disagree) and 4 (partially agree). Thus, the respondents did not express a clear/strong attachment with the community in which they live.
<b>Perceived positive tourism impacts*</b>	Positive Tourism impacts scale (Chen and Chen, 2010; 15 items, for example: 'Tourism has increased job opportunities for your community'; 'Tourism has raised the level of life for residents'): The overall average of the benefit scale is 3.45 and cannot be considered too high. The perception of the surplus value that the tourist development can entail is, tendentially, in the sense of the agreement, although low.
<b>Perceived negative tourism impacts*</b>	Negative Tourism impacts scale (Chen and Chen, 2010; 12 items, for example: 'Tourism has raised local product price'; 'Tourism has increased residents' living costs'): The overall average of the costs scale is 2.52. The residents who answered the questionnaire tend to disagree with the affirmations made about the tourism costs, that is, the residents do not perceive any negative impacts caused by the tourist activity in their communities.
<b>Trust in government actors**</b>	Trust in government actors scale (Nunkoo, 2012; 4 items): How much do you trust local elected officials to make the right decisions in tourism development? (3.08); How much do you trust local government to do what is right in tourism development without you having constantly to check on them? (3.03); How much do you trust local government to look after the interests of the community in relation to tourism development? (3.04); How much do you trust tourism decisions made by local government? (3.15). The overall average of the trust scale is 3.08, that is, on average, this scale has a value slightly higher than the position 3 (neither trust nor mistrust). In other words, overall there is a neutral view on this issue.
<b>Tourism dependence*</b>	Tourism dependence scale (Chen and Chen, 2010; 2 items): My work is closely related to the tourism industry (2.13); My family income is closely linked to the tourism industry (1.85). The overall average of this scale is 1.99. We observed a weak relationship, that is, residents who answered the questionnaire have a low degree of dependence on tourism.
<b>Support for tourism development*</b>	Tourism development support scale (Nunkoo, 2012; 4 items): Tourism is the most important industry for my community (3.32); Tourism help my community grow in the right directions (3.66); Tourism continue to play an important economic role (3.86); I am proud that tourists are coming in my community (4.30). The results highlight the residents 'pride in tourists' visits to the town and the view that tourism plays an important role in local economic development. The overall average of this scale reached the value of 3.79.

\* Measured in a Likert-type scale from 1: Strongly disagree to 5: Strongly agree;

\*\* Measured in a Likert-type scale from 1: Total distrust to 5: Total trust

Source: Authors' own elaboration

**Table 6: Descriptive analysis (RT specific questions)**

Potential for promotion as a RT destination	Yes (84%); No (5%); I do not know/do not answer (11%)
Current flow of RT	Low (14%); Moderate (42.7%); High (43.4%)
Importance that the RT will play in the future	Much less importance (0.7%); Less importance (6.7%); The same importance (38%); Much more important (30.7%); More importance (24%)
Source: Authors' own elaboration	

(though moderately) tourism development (they consider tourism to play a relevant role in economic development place and enjoy the visit of tourists to their community). In addition, respondents tend not to perceive the costs associated with tourism activities so clearly, and this result is in line with Vieira's study (2014). Concerning trust in local public institutions, it is noted that respondents tend not to distrust or trust, that is, they are neutral in response to this question.

Table 6 shows the descriptive analysis of some specific aspects related to RT.

Clearly, residents say that Lamego has potential for promotion as a religious tourist destination, considering its history, existing monuments and cultural and religious surroundings. In addition, respondents consider that there is a high flow of RT in the town and that in the future will be of greater importance. Sousa and Pinheiro (2014) confirm that the municipality of Lamego has been implementing a series of initiatives that are fundamental to directly and / or indirectly promoting RT, to a large extent, focused on the figure of the patron saint of the town – Nossa Senhora dos Remédios.

In a correlation analysis we tried to verify the existence of associations between the current flow of RT

(question 10) and the importance of the RT (question 11) in the future, with the remaining variables under analysis (Table 7).

The perception of the current flow of RT in Lamego (Q10) is positively related to community attachment ( $r = 0.244$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ), with tourism benefits ( $r = 0.194$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ), with the support for tourism development ( $r = 0.269$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ) and with trust in government actors ( $r = 0.281$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ). All these correlations are significant ( $p < 0.05$ ), but of low intensity, indicating a slight tendency to increase the perception of the current flow of RT in Lamego with an increase in the scales mentioned. In contrast, the correlation with tourism costs ( $r = -0.058$ ,  $p > 0.05$ ) and tourism dependency ( $r = 0.101$ ,  $p > 0.05$ ) are close to zero and not significant ( $p > 0.05$ ).

Regarding the perception of the importance that RT will have in the next years in the town of Lamego (Q11), the correlations are positive with community attachment ( $r = 0.333$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ), tourism benefits ( $r = 0.349$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ), support for tourism development ( $r = 0.476$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ) and trust ( $r = 0.371$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ). On the other hand, the correlation is negative with tourism costs ( $r = -0.286$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ). There is no significant correlation with tourism dependence ( $r = 0.111$ ;  $p > 0.05$ ).

**Table 7: Spearman Correlation Coefficients between the answers to questions 10 and 11 and the scales scores (N = 150)**

Escalas	Q10. 'How would you describe the current flow of RT in Lamego?'	Q11. 'In the coming years, what importance RT will play in Lamego?'
1. Community attachment	0.244**	0.323**
2. Positive tourism impacts	0.194*	0.349**
3. Negative tourism impacts	-0.058	-0.286**
4. Support for tourism development	0.269**	0.476**
5. Trust in government actors	0.281**	0.371**
6. Tourism dependence	0.101	0.111
* $p < 0.05$ ; ** $p < 0.01$ .		
Source: Authors' own elaboration		

### ***Main results of the study carried out with heritage managers, tour operators and local authorities***

The qualitative investigation was carried out with various entities, private, public and private linked to the sphere of tourism in this town of Lamego (19 interviews). The heterogeneity of the sample is due, to a certain extent, to the activity or function of each of the actors. We are dealing with a clearly male sample (89.5% of the interviewees are male), characterised by a high degree of education (76.5% of the sample has higher education), with a mean age of 46.69 years

(standard deviation: 11.84 years), and almost all respondents reside in Lamego. In terms of function, we can say that the sample is relatively heterogeneous, and there is a considerable representation of managers, directors, senior technicians and presidents.

Table 8 presents a brief summary of the perceptions and opinions of the chosen group taking into account the considered dimensions.

In summary, in the study of local agents, it was

**Table 8: Summary of the interviews made to heritage managers, tour operators and local authorities**

<b>Main dimensions (categories)</b>	<b>Summary of Interviews (perceptions and opinions) of the local agents group</b>
<b>RT concept</b>	The vast majority of the respondents demonstrated knowledge of the term RT. In the opinion of the interviewees, RT is essentially designed by tourism driven by the faith cult, in which are associated events, festivals and a religious calendar. It represents one of the most important means of attraction to the town and society in general, in that it translates into religious experience and knowledge.
<b>Potential of the town of Lamego to be promoted as a RT destination</b>	The interviewees sustain that there is RT in the town of Lamego. The overwhelming majority recognise the potential of the town of Lamego to become a RT destination due to its location (because it is part of the Douro Heritage), because it has the Patroness and many links to religious history and monuments (it has history, heritage infrastructure, religious events and culture to attract visitors).
<b>The importance of RT in terms of attracting visitors to the town of Lamego and impacts on the resident community</b>	The entities mention that tourism in Lamego is essentially a 'passing through' type, focused more on the summer months and, in terms of RT, has its high point in Holy Week and in the celebrations of Nossa Senhora dos Remédios ('The celebrity of Nossa Senhora dos Remédios attracts an impressive number of people. This is, of course, a valuable 'asset' that enhances local businesses' - Ent.19) The importance of RT in relation to the total tourist flow that occurs in the town is, for the interviewees, about 50%.
<b>RT's contribution to the development of the local economy</b>	Most of the interviewees recognised the importance of the RT contribution to the local economy, with a special focus on hospitality, gastronomy and commerce. On the other hand, we have interviewees who consider that this contribution is small, directly benefiting the Church ('Much of the profit from this kind of tourism reverts directly to the church' - Ent. 2).
<b>The role played by the various stakeholders (public tourist entities, private tourism organisations and other institutions) in the development and promotion of RT</b>	Public representatives linked to local political power and religious institutions say they are willing to cooperate with all 'agents'. Representatives of other institutions stated that community support for events should be better distributed and utilised. There are some complaints about a certain ineffectiveness of peers, that is, they complain about each other. There is a recognition that there is much improvement to be made at the level of programming and communication. Most of the interviewees consider that the various stakeholders are willing to collaborate in the development and promotion of RT in the town of Lamego, since it is an added value and is central to this type of tourism. A small portion of the interviewees believe that there is a lack of network understanding and a lack of vision to make RT work more dynamic.
<b>Proposals for the development of RT</b>	Almost all respondents say they are not aware of any current initiative to promote RT in the town. However, the autarchy claims that it has been implementing several initiatives and that it cooperates with the Bishopric and with the population. The autarchy states that several projects are already taking place, several works of requalification and valorisation, and the development of several partnerships. Suggestions for the development of the RT emphasise the need for more information, promotion and development of new activities, more parking, better signage and longer hours for visits to monuments. There are those who suggest that public and private entities should work more in a network, and more involvement of tourism agents with the population and commerce in general, the development of easy-to-understand tourist itineraries and the organisation of religious events.

Source: Authors' own elaboration



immediately visible, from the interviews, their difficulty in defining RT. If RT can be considered as a market segment different from all others, having faith as a main motivation, it is not necessarily a tourism undertaken by religious people of all beliefs. The main objective of the RT is to visit religious sites as well as to participate in rituals of worship where the main tourist motivation is religion. This is the vision of RT in Lamego, substantially associated with the Pilgrimage of Nossa Senhora dos Remédios. This type of tourism cannot be considered individually, instead being integrated in the 'Cultural Tourism' product. Regardless of the conceptual difficulty that this brings, RT has grown steadily in the last three decades in the country, and is expected to grow more. The wealth of Lamego's religious heritage is unanimously acknowledged. But for those interviewed, churches, apart from a place of worship, are also spaces of history, memory and art.

The interviewed local agents are widely aware of the potential of the town for the development of tourism in general, and RT in particular; however, they are quite critical, for example, of the role of the resident community, which should be more creative, proactive and coordinated. Based on a rich historical / cultural heritage, Lamego is considered by the stakeholders interviewed as a tourist destination of excellence for the religious / cultural sector. One of the main bases of development of the town has been the opportunities arising from the utilisation of its tourist potentialities (in general and in RT in particular); however, in the RT field these opportunities are still somewhat underutilised. Interestingly, Pereira (2009) reaches the very same conclusion regarding the city of Braga.

to conclude, It is possible that most managers of religious heritage are still at the margin of the whole dimension of the visit. Organised visits are not yet properly organised; there are difficulties in the way of receiving visitors and also in the quality of the information provided and in the accessibility conditions. It is precisely in this perspective that the stakeholders assume the need for a greater dynamism of local network projects and the creation of a network of synergies. Religious heritage alone is not enough. It is fundamental to have an articulation between all those who are positioned on the ground to grow the religious heritage business.

## Conclusion and Implications

The main objective of the study carried out with several stakeholders in the historic town of Lamego relate to the understanding of their perceptions on the relationship between religion and tourism. In this context, we seek to know what they think about the potential of RT for the development of the territory.

The study concluded that the visitors interviewed like the visit they make and would recommend it, but do not visit Lamego for religious reasons, despite visiting religious monuments as main activities during the stay. The visitors remain in the town for a short time, and the economic participation they leave is reduced. Based on the results of the study undertaken with visitors who answered the questionnaire, we cannot classify them in the segment of RT, in an exclusively motivated sense that has to do with devotion and religious practices; however, and taking into account the link between culture and religion, and the historical, cultural and religious characteristics of the heritage in this town, its visitors fall into the context of cultural tourism. The great majority of the visitors, although manifesting motivations other than religious ones, consider that there is a great potential for promoting this historic town as a religious tourist destination.

Resident respondents do not have a clear view on the benefits of tourism, or manifest themselves very attached to the community. Their support for the development of tourism is limited and they maintain a neutral position in relation to trust in local public institutions. The residents report that Lamego has a great potential for promotion as a religious tourist destination, they consider that there is a high flow of RT in the town and that in the future it will be of greater importance.

According to the views expressed by local agents, RT constitutes an opportunity to be explored more intensively in the town. By the analysis of the interviews, the patrimonial / historical / religious richness in this historic town is indisputable. However, there is a need for a new culture, a new attitude towards the relationship between the entities directly or indirectly linked to tourism, given the specificities of the places of worship, which are representative of this town's heritage and memory. If the valorisation and dissemination of the religious heritage is an important tourist asset for Lamego, it is necessary to promote and commercialise this historic town as a religious tourist destination.



With this study we seek to contribute to the management and valuation of RT in Lamego. From the perspective of several stakeholders, we highlight the importance of analysing the visions and perceptions of the various stakeholder groups in the whole process of tourism development in general and in the development of RT in particular.

The support that the local community of Lamego can give to this development can take many forms and the agents interviewed acknowledge that all have done something for the development of the RT of the town, but there is much work to be done at various levels. Of course, the effort required for a particular locality to enhance tourism (and RT in particular) and use it as a development tool is always considerable.

From the conducted interviews and the qualitative and quantitative analysis of the data, there clearly emerges an understanding that this historic town has great potential for RT. However, the current initiatives to explore this potential are not part of a process of coordinated territorial development. As mentioned by Silva (2011), initiatives that take advantage of this potential to energise territories need intervention capacities that maintain a balance between political, economic and religious sensitivities. In this sense, we suggest that the agents and actors responsible for the development of tourism must work, in a coordinated and strategic manner, on issues such as communication, networking, trust of the residents and

their inclusion / involvement in all plans of action, benchmarking, and infrastructure. That is, it is important that stakeholders participate in tourism development processes at this location, especially with regard to RT.

There are various limitations to this study. The questionnaire-based surveys and the interviews carried out were restricted by time and financial considerations, to the visitors, residents, and local agents (heritage managers, tour operators, local authorities, etc.). However, there is a need to incorporate the perceptions and opinions of more stakeholder groups, namely national government, non tourism-related managers, educational institutions, tourism associations and organisations, among others. On the other hand, the research was undertaken in a single moment of time (cross-sectional study), and this may be seen as a limitation since there is no guarantee that the views expressed by the various stakeholder groups will continue in the future. Thus, it will be relevant that these perceptions be measured over time, to examine the long-term tourism sustainability of this destination.

In the research, a convenience sampling method was used. As a convenience sample, residents and visitors with certain characteristics might have been underrepresented. So, additional studies should use other methods in order to collect more representative information.

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