3. From Overtourism to Under-Tourism, and Back Again

In this chapter, the authors explore the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the tourist industry in Portugal, using findings from fieldwork conducted during 2021 and 2022. The aim is to learn more about the challenges industry stakeholders have faced during an unprecedented and unpredictable public health emergency. In Chapter 1, we noted the extent of the financial losses incurred during the first two years of the pandemic, and in Chapter 2, some of the moral quandaries that arose from travelling during times of restricted circulation. We now wish to take a more in-depth look at these issues.

In order to do so, the authors have adopted a number of pre-existing theoretical concepts. The first is a relatively familiar theme, namely the idea of 'overtourism.' This is a topic that attracted a large amount of academic scrutiny during the decade of expansionism that preceded the pandemic (see, e.g., Capocchi et al, 2019; Milano et al, 2019; Volo, 2020), becoming a cause celebre in many of the cities that were most visited by international tourists. This includes Lisbon and Porto in Portugal – and internationally, Venice, Amsterdam and Barcelona - where in the years prior to the pandemic, tourist numbers increased massively (Malet Calvo and Ramos, 2018). As well as re-visiting 'overtourism,' the authors also try to make sense of the sudden collapse in tourist numbers during the pandemic. While we can discuss this transformation through citing statistics about lower visitor numbers and lost revenue, as in Chapter 1, we now wish to appreciate changes in the meaning of international tourism using the idea of 'under-tourism,' While this is another pre-existing concept, having been used in the past by tourism researchers to help identify new sites for exploitation (Gaitree Gowreesunkar and Vo Thanh, 2020), we interpret 'under-tourism' somewhat differently, as a term that describes issues arising from the sudden decline in visitor numbers within a previously popular destination.

Tourism in Portugal

Before we address these theoretical issues, we want to provide a brief commentary on the significance of tourism in Portuguese society. While most countries attract visitors who make a contribution to the national economy, the tourist industry occupies a prominent place in public and political discourse in Portugal, its status as a popular destination for people from across the world seen as a source of civic pride. The industry itself is keen to stress its economic importance with success advertised in terms of rises in visitor numbers and levels of their estimated expenditure, issues we introduced in Chapter 1. More recently, there has also been recognition of the tourist industry's contribution to reaching sustainability goals, thereby addressing the potential negative impact made by international travel on the environment.[1]

The importance of tourism in Portugal helps explain why the downturn in the industry's fortunes at the start of the pandemic was such a huge concern, marking the end of a long period of success in a country that as recently as a decade ago was embroiled in a major economic crisis (Fletcher, 2011; Fletcher and Neves, 2012). This may help explain why the plight of the tourist industry and associated sectors of the economy, including aviation and hospitality, featured prominently on news reportage in Portugal since the very first days of the COVID-19 crisis, with the sight of grounded planes, empty airports and cordoned off beaches becoming some of the most iconic images of the first year of the pandemic. International tourism obviously matters a great deal, and the authors should also note that the significance of tourism in a destination country like Portugal is different compared to the countries that are more likely to be sending people abroad. In those countries, the loss of tourism is associated with the removal of the freedom to engage in unrestricted travel, but in the destinations the internal narrative is going to be somewhat different, focused on the loss of incoming tourists and their money rather than the loss of the entitlement to be international tourists.

Before we continue, we should also add a further brief note about how the status of tourism in Portugal has acted as a kind of barometer of the evolution of COVID-19 in the national context, with the impact of the virus measured not only by numbers of infections, hospital internments and fatalities but also the severity of the restrictions imposed on international travel; legal requirements for vaccine certificates, negative lateral flow tests and mandatory quarantine on return home. We might say that the more restrictions there were in place, and the fewer the number of travellers, the worse the pandemic was assumed to be. This approach also meant lifting restrictions being interpreted as a sign that the pandemic was in remission, irrespective of the actual epidemiological situation. As we explored in the previous chapter, this is a reflection of the industry's political strength and its ability to leverage the support of determined travellers via the use of 'moral economy' arguments against the government and public health experts, with this strategy arguably leading to the premature end of most sanitary procedures, the opening of full scale tourism coinciding with the start of a sixth wave of infections in spring 2022.

Overtourism and under-tourism

To help us move forward, the authors want to look at with two similar sounding but contrasting ideas that helps us to explain how tourism expanded in the decade preceding the pandemic and contracted after the start of the crisis. Having presented some fairly simple statistics in Chapter 1, that suggest a drastic change in international tourism's popularity in the early months of the pandemic, we now want to consider why this has been such a problem for the tourist industry, and by association, societies like Portugal that have become dependent on its revenues. In addition to highlighting some of the fairly self-evident problems that have arisen during the pandemic, such as the loss of revenue, we also look at the opportunities created by the presence

of fewer visitors, including engagement with what are defined as models of sustainable tourisms.

'Overtourism'

'Overtourism' is an issue many of us should be familiar with by now, whether as a visitor to an overcrowded destination or a resident of such a place. In descriptive terms, it is fairly easy to say why 'overtourism' happens: too many people wanting to visit the same place at the same time, attracted by its natural beauty or historical significance, or iconic appearances in films and television programmes. Tourism then becomes a problem as the expanded numbers cannot be adequately hosted, ruining the visitor experience and creating tensions within local communities. In regard to what 'overtourism' looks like, common signs include the presence of oversized cruise ships on city riverbanks, industrial scale short-term letting in residential areas and multiple low-cost airlines competing for business with each other at busy airports, with the widespread use of information technology having been used to promote these destinations (Capocchi et al, 2019, pp.1-6; see also Srnicek, 2017). There is also a suggestion that there is a lack of effective structures of governance in the over-visited destinations, with attempts to limit numbers vehemently opposed by those who are benefiting from expansion. These remarks imply that while 'overtourism' is an artificial situation, created by an inability or an unwillingness to manage international tourism, not everyone sees it as a problem, specifically those who profit from it.

Another aspect of 'overtourism' relates to the ineffectiveness of solutions that have been proposed to tackle it. There is a tendency not so much to downplay the problem, or deny its existence, but rather to adopt policies that actively extend 'overtourism' rather than end its dominance. This is quite evident in regard to ideas promoted by stakeholder organizations like the politically influential United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO). While it is

acknowledged by tourism agencies that certain destinations are receiving too many visitors, to the point where the visitor presence becomes a disruptive influence, eliminating or obscuring the characteristics that made the place attractive in the first place, proposed 'solutions' include the adoption of measures to spread visitor numbers across a wider range of sites rather than reduce the tourist population in size (see, e.g., UNWTO, 2018). Needless to say, this view is neither helpful nor objective, and potentially multiplies 'overtourism' rather than curtailing it, encouraging even more people to travel.

Following on from this point then, although the habitually overcrowded cities attract the most headlines, equally important is the diffusion of tourists to a wider range of destinations, including places that lack the capacity to host large numbers of visitors. This includes the presence of visitors in places not traditionally associated with tourism, especially residential areas, with Airbnb-type letting becoming highly problematic in such neighbourhoods (Cocola Gant and Gago, 2021). Added to this concern is the temporal dispersal of holidaymaking throughout the calendar year. In the case of Portugal, and no doubt many other countries, this has meant all-year-round large scale tourism, stretching far outside the traditional summer season. The impression created is that tourists are everywhere at all times, providing us with a more accurate view of 'overtourism' compared to the ideas promoted by agencies like the UNWTO.

More imaginatively, there is a shift in the meaning of tourism when it is maximized; for visitors, the experience is devalued by overcrowding and other forms of material discomfort; for residents, tourists become a hard to manage presence within their communities, posing a threat to local livelihoods and disrupting the character of neighbourhoods. In regard to other aspects of 'overtourism,' the idea that it is commercially important to constantly expand also prevails, a position that has been prominent in the Portuguese context, and superficially, the economic arguments appear very convincing. For instance, according to the

most recently published Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) figures, relating to 2018, the tourism sector was contributing eight per cent of Gross Added Value to the Portuguese economy and employing nine per cent of the working population, taking advantage of an increase in number of visitors from the Americas and Asia, as well as continued popularity as a destination for tourists from the United Kingdom, Germany, Spain, France and Brazil (OECD, 2020). This quantitative success helps explain why increasing the number of visitors comes to be seen as an intrinsically good thing, regardless of any negative consequences.

In regard to the scale of expansion, statistical evidence about international tourism supports the idea that there has been a dramatic rise in foreign visitor numbers during the last decade. Figures from the national statistics agency in Portugal are broadly similar to the OECD figures cited in Figure 1.2, suggesting that the number of estimated arrivals per year peaked at just under 25 million in 2019, then plummeting to just 6.5 million visitors during the first year of the pandemic.[2] Visitor numbers obviously matter a great deal, but another way of looking at the success of expansionism is to look at the amount of revenue being potentially generated by incoming tourists, including their estimated expenditure on hotels and other forms of accommodation during their stays in Portugal.

Insert Figure 3.1 here

Figure 3.1 illustrates the extent of the rise in the estimated expenditure levels, with a near decade long period of growth until the abrupt decline at the start of 2020. These statistics, along with the breakdowns included in Chapter 1, seem to confirm the success of tourism during this timeframe, at least in numerical and economic terms, and also make clear the precise point at which expansionism came to an end: the start of the COVID-19 crisis. Given the

apparent rapidity of the turnaround, we can see that the pandemic must have come as an extreme shock to the system, although this of course does not mean that the same rate of expansionism would have continued indefinitely without the intervention of a public health emergency.

'Overtourism' is clearly a complex issue, with opponents and exponents, especially the difficulty of establishing the optimal level of visitor numbers. Disguised aspects of the phenomenon, such as the spreading of tourists to a wider range of sites within a country and the elongation of tourist seasons are also major concerns, despite not necessarily been recognized as such. While there is no agreement about how to tackle the problem, the various sides in this debate can agree upon the fact that the pre-pandemic situation was becoming intolerable, but the worst case scenario has now been avoided, ironically, through the intervention of the pandemic. As such, the more immediate concern is to address the sudden downturn in tourism's fortunes, and the need to address problems created by lower visitor numbers.

'Under-tourism'

These reflections take us to the next part of our discussion, which relates to the phenomenon of 'under-tourism.' This is a term used much less frequently than 'overtourism,' describing problems arising from a lack of visitors. Research has been limited in scope, and the small number of studies that do exist tend to view 'under-tourism' quite literally and from a tourist industry perspective, as the sub-optimal performance of the industry in specific places. Unpopularity with visitors also tends to be explained by what are quite obvious reasons: infrastructure deficits such as not having a suitable airport, poorly maintained roads, unserviceable rail links or insufficiently open borders, alongside past events that have created

an image this is off-putting to tourists, including wars, terrorism and public health crises (Gowreesunkar and Tan Vo Thanh, 2020, 45-6; see also Seraphin and Gowreesunkar, 2017).

A lack of popularity with visitors is obviously a concern for the tourist industry, but until now, 'under-tourism' has been seen as a marginal phenomenon, afflicting relatively few destinations. We cannot say this about the first two years of the COVID-19 pandemic as the scale of 'under-tourism' is massive due to the huge geographical spread of the virus, affecting practically all forms of international travel for prolonged periods, bringing with it the very real prospect of lasting damage to the tourist industry and other dependent sectors of the economy. Neither can this new form of 'under-tourism' be ascribed to limited transportation infrastructure or poor destination image. The outward signs of the new 'under-tourism' should by now be familiar to all: during the first lockdowns, the mass cancellations of flights and curtailment of other forms of transportation, not to mention the mandatory quarantines, testing procedures, mask-wearing and social distancing that continued to make international travel difficult to manage once it had partially restarted.

The inability to continue to expand tourism inevitably raised major concerns for the industry and its existing business model; two years of depressed revenues and the likelihood of lower numbers of incoming visitors for some time to come. There is also the challenge of restarting full-scale tourism in an industry that divested itself of many skilled employees, who may prove be hard to replace. This latter issue raise doubts about the wisdom of a rapid return; a risk for countries like Portugal is that there is a lurch from one extreme to another, with neither 'under-tourism' or 'overtourism' being particularly satisfactory positions. It is then vital for the tourist industry to find some kind of point of equilibrium in regard to visitor numbers and their temporal and spatial distribution, and we are in fact already seeing signs that this need has been recognized, with the development of tourism oriented around key sustainability concerns.

The tourist industry response

In regard to the methodological approach taken in this book, it is fair to say that like tourists, the authors have been constrained by circumstances, including the restrictions placed on social interactions. Much of our fieldwork was conducted during the winter of 2021-22, coinciding with the fifth wave of the COVID-19 pandemic in Portugal, and the rapid spread of the first of the highly infectious Omicron variants. This situation forced us to adapt our methods, conducting research using socially distanced and remote methods. For this reason, we need to stress the exploratory nature of our evidence and analysis, having made a deliberate decision to avoid engaging in activities that might be in any way injurious to research subjects. We have however been able to build upon a wealth of experience in conducting remote fieldwork gained during earlier stages in the pandemic, which helped us considerably in the development of web-based approaches to the studying the impact of the crisis (see Cairns et al, 2021a, 2021b; Malet Calvo et al, 2021).

For the remainder of this chapter, we use evidence relating to the management of tourism in Portugal. This involved engagement with stakeholders in the Portuguese tourist industry, alongside exploration of the online discourse generated by various national and regional tourism agencies. Fieldwork involved contacting all the main tourism promotion agencies in Portugal, which cover all the main regions – Porto and the North, Centre of Portugal, Alentejo, Algarve, Azores and Madeira - as well as the offices of national agencies in Lisbon. The authors provided online questions to members of staff about the impact the pandemic has made on their work, with later follow-up questions where clarification was necessary. In regard to timeframe, this evidence was gathered in November and December 2021, with the follow-up questions asked during January 2022.

Coping with the pandemic

The author start with an assessment of how agencies coped with the immediate impacts arising from the restrictions placed on international travel from March 2020 onwards. An obvious means of assistance for tourism, especially during the initial months of near total disruption, was the obtaining of economic support from the state. Looking at the evidence gathered from the ten agencies the authors surveyed, the impression created was that financial transfers constituted the most immediate means of addressing the problems created by the initial shutdown; for example, money being used to cover the cost of adapting facilities to meet new legal obligations so that when tourists were able to travel, they could be accommodated in a manner that was complying with public safety regulations.

In regard to how this support was obtained, industry figures made clear that their requests were grounded in economic expediency, and that they needed to remain operational during the shutdowns at some level due to the high importance of tourism to the national economy. This argumentation is illustrated by the following account from a respondent in one of Portugal's regional agencies:

> Since the beginning of the pandemic, problems were detected in companies, with special focus on the tourism sector […]. This was evident right from the start, when in April 2020, the weekly surveys by INE [national statistics agency] found that 82.2 per cent of companies were in partial or total production, but in tourism, that percentage was 38.3; at the same time, 31.7 per cent of all companies reported a drop in turnover of more than 75 per cent, while in tourism the percentage was 71.1, and 29.5 per cent of companies indicated a reduction in staff in service of more than 75 per cent, while in tourism it was 64.6 per cent.

The message being sent to us as researchers is that the tourist industry has endured a disproportionate level of 'suffering' arising from the public health restrictions imposed on international travel, with this position confirmed by citing some of the same statistics from the national statistics agency in Portugal that we cited earlier in this chapter (see Table 3.1). We are also provided with other indicators that show how other sectors of the economy were comparatively unaffected by the restrictions at this time, and presumably did not need the same levels of support, implying that more assistance could be given to tourism. The point is further developed by the following respondent, from one of Portugal's largest regional tourist agencies:

There are challenges in tourism that are not present in other industries, since we work directly with people, who are travelling to Portugal from all over the world. This is not like the construction industry, which was allowed to continue during the periods of lockdown, or manufacturing, where some minor adjustments could be made to keep people in factories safe.

Also emphasised, by another respondent from a national agency based in Lisbon, are the important interconnections tourism has with other sectors of the economy. This means that the impact of government support given to tourism can multiply in its importance, through helping to hold together crucial parts of a larger economic infrastructure:

Tourism is a vitally important industry to the Portuguese economy. There are also the industries that depend on tourism, especially hospitality and all the supply chains. So, when you help the tourist industry, you are helping these sectors as well.

Taken at face value, this positioning is highly effective. A multi-layered argument is established, maximizing the importance of the industry to the national economy, in financial terms and through its status as an employer and part of a greater chain of financial dependency. We can also see how statistics are used pragmatically by the tourist industry, including the Portuguese government's own figures, which the state is presumably not going to contest. If we were being more cynical, it could however be pointed out that in estimating the extent of the loss, comparisons are being made using the pre-pandemic peak levels of tourism, the 'over-tourism' situation that brought its own set of problems for local communities. Looking further back in time at the data, we might even argue that what happened in 2020 was only a return to levels of tourism similar to the state of affairs before the expansionist decade. As such, the downturn could be credibly interpreted as a reversion to the mean rather than an 'unnatural' contraction. Regardless of how we interpret this situation, the amount of financial support provided by the state was never going to be equivalent to the still potentially amounts that were being lost through the absence of international visitors, although tourist agency staff were generally satisfied to know that their special position within the economy had been recognized by the state.

In regard to other forms of support, we have various accounts of exactly what was provided during the first year of the pandemic, including money used to maintain the integrity of the industry. For example, one respondent from another regional tourism agency explained to us what had been made available to her organization:

> Given this [pandemic] panorama, several instruments and support measures were made available, that can be summarized around three essential objectives: cash flow support; investment support and support to maintain jobs. These instruments can also be divided between transversal support to the economy and specific support for the tourism sector.

In explaining what this arrangement entailed, some forms of support were provided to a wide range of sectors of the economy in Portugal, including lay-off schemes to pay employees for not working. Specifically for tourism, non-refundable transfers were made available via an aptly named *Adapt Programme*, which at first involved making money available for the purchase of personal protective equipment (masks, acrylics, dispensers, etc.) then, as mentioned previously, a fund for the adaptation of tourist activities to comply with the new health and safety guidelines. Such was the popularity of this programme, the original budget allocation of five million euros was exhausted within 24 hours, and later had to be increased to ten million euros. Interest-free loans were also made available to small and medium-sized businesses in the tourism sector, with a one-year grace period, the repayment process overseen by the *Turismo de Portugal* agency, with this time limit later extended due to the problems in the economy persisting.

Taking these accounts at face value, the investment made by the state in tourism at this time appears quite reasonable, and logical if we accept the industry's view of its importance of the economy in Portugal. From its own point of view, their lobbying is not cynical but rather an example of hard-pressed people doing their jobs effectively, with a view to retaining these jobs in what are very difficult circumstances; it is not their duty to be the arbiters of some kind of objective truth about the actual economic value of tourism. From the state's perspective, in making what are, in reality, fairly token gestures – providing millions of euros where billions appear to have been lost (see also Nhamo et al, 2020) – the Portuguese government is also seen to be doing something about the pandemic and its impact on the national economy, when in fact it is doing relatively little beyond supporting a few placeholding measures such as the creation of digital platforms to convey the message that the interruption to international travel is temporary.

The sustainability response

Moving on from questions of financial support, we might want to consider other, less prominent developments that have taken place in the tourist industry during the pandemic, particularly as the crisis moved into its second year. In the case of Portugal, this included addressing sustainability issues, acknowledging the negative impact made by international travel on the environment. While growing in prominence in this national context, this strategy is aligned with contemporaneous developments at international level, reflected in discourse issued on platforms hosted by the UNWTO, that has helped to make sustainability a 'core tenet' of the industry (Yang et al, 2021, 8). At national level, *Turismo de Portugal* also has a plan for 'Sustainable Tourism 2020-2023,' centred on making tourist resorts energy efficient in terms of water and waste management systems, and the agency is also looking at ways of reducing the use of single use plastics by international visitors.

Looking at the evidence the authors have been able to gather, the impression created is that the industry's main focus has been on attaining a more equal geographical distribution of foreign tourists in Portugal, suggesting alignment with the view of 'overtourism' promoted by the UNWTO cited previously, rather than any attempt to engage in the 'degrowth' processes that have been suggested by some commentators as an alternate solution (see, e.g., Fletcher et al, 2019; Higgins-Desbiolles et al, 2019). The position among tourist industry agencies in Portugal can be summarized as one of wanting to maintain, or even increase, visitor numbers at national level via their regional diffusion; the extra numbers are to be directed towards the less visited inland destinations, which appear to have been suffering from the old form of 'under-tourism,' thus helping them attain some kind of parity with the popular beach resorts and coastal cities of Portugal. Needless to say, this approach was endorsed by agencies based in the less visited regions.

As I mentioned, this agency aims for a better temporal and spatial distribution of tourism demand, opting in all circumstances to acquire local services in all the supply chains of the local or regional tourism sector. This involves promoting, valuing and incorporating in its offer seasonal and endogenous products of a diverse nature - from food products to burel derivatives. We are consistently promoting regional brands that by their nature promote and incorporate sustainable elements […] incorporating, whenever possible, the promotion or use of sustainable mobility.

As found in UNWTO discourse, we can also observe the deployment of the idea of making tourism an all-year-round activity in a wider range of places, alongside emphasis on the industry's value to regional economies. In this respondent's case, the sale of burel, a traditional Portuguese textile made from pure sheep wool, manufactured in the region of Serra da Estrela (the highest mountain in Portugal), traditionally associated with shepherds. We might then argue that this is a form of sustainability grounded in economic imperatives as well as, or rather than, pure environmentalism.

Assessing this position, and taking into account the challenges that have arisen during the pandemic for the tourist industry, we might also see regional diversification as part of the process of adapting to changing demands from consumers. In doing so, there is an opportunity to take advantage of the presence of fewer international tourists. This shift in emphasis is present not only in our evidence but also in materials published on digital platforms as part of pandemic era promotional campaigns, extending to efforts made to contain the virus being presented as part of the appeal of rural Portugal.

During the pandemic, sites including *Turismo de Portugal* also published information to help keep prospective customers informed about the unfolding situation within the industry,

including the current state of restrictions and the sanitary procedures put in place to provide re-assurance to reluctant travellers. The idea, then, was through making the 'problem' visible it could be seen to have been managed, with potential visitors able to make informed decisions about travelling, adjusting their expectations in the process. This proposition was also present online marketing materials published by the 'VisitPortugal' agency. The message being transmitting transmitted informs potential customers, literally, that 'you are safe with us. Breathe deeply and enjoy.' The 'VisitPortugal' platform is thus able to make very good use of the relative peace and quiet inadvertently created by the relative emptiness of the pandemic, which is now marketed as an integral part of the country's appeal.

The message has been further integrated into online initiatives at national and regional levels in Portugal. This includes portals mentioned by the agency respondents, 'Better Dreams Ahead' and 'Embrace you Soon,' directed at international and local markets. In regard to content, alongside depictions of holidaymaking possibilities, these platforms reflect concerns that have featured prominently in news agendas, including environmental activism. For example, on 'Better Dreams Ahead,' we can read the story of how the tourist industry has declared a climate emergency, implying an alignment between tourism and environmentalism. 'Embrace you Soon,' meanwhile, a site hosted by the Centre of Portugal tourism agency, takes a gentler approach, emphasising the bucolic joys of the country's inland destinations. The agency's very attractive message – and pictures of clear blue skies and luscious vegetation – provides a contrast to the chaos of urban life, that has been further complicated in cities by the demands of a seemingly endless public health crisis. Lest anyone miss this subtext, the message is made clear in an accompanying text: 'Ironically, quarantine has given us that most precious commodity: time. For us and for ourselves. It's time to take a deep breath and discover life. Once we start travelling again, we will do it slowly. To enjoy life to the full. Without rushing.'

We can then see some signs of a convergence between long-standing sustainability concerns and the need to address the 'under-tourism,' both in its traditional form and the new variety associated with the pandemic. The main focus is now on the enrichment of the international travel experience, inadvertently made more exclusive by the decline in visitor numbers at national level, and with potential environmental gains through less intensive use of aviation and other forms of polluting transportation.

Summary

These reflections take the authors towards some final reflections on 'overtourism' and 'under-tourism,' and the integration of sustainability into the marketing of tourism in Portugal during the pandemic. Most obviously, we can appreciate that this event constitutes an end to the expansionism of the recent past, even if the stoppage is neither absolute nor permanent. Fewer people have been travelling, and two years on from the start of the crisis, numbers remain short of pre-pandemic peak levels, with long-haul travel remaining particularly problematic. New problems are also emerging, including the threat posed by the war in Ukraine, and genuine concerns about the capacity of airports in the formerly popular destinations to cope with a sudden return to pre-pandemic levels of visitors.

There remains within the tourist industry in Portugal, and no doubt in other mobility dependent sectors of the economy, the need to find an equilibrium between 'overtourism' and 'under-tourism,' avoiding having too many or not enough visitors, and a solution of sorts has been found in sustainability, encouraging people to visit places with fewer tourists, although this is still in its tentative stages. This approach can also involve making use of Portugal's natural resources, with tranquil stays in inland destinations particularly appealing, making rural tourism an important area for future investigation.