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Industrial Tourism in Small and Medium-Sized Industrial Enterprises: Challenges and Opportunities

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Abstract: This paper explores Industrial Tourism (IT) within Portuguese small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs). It aims to identify the main challenges and opportunities of this tourism product and offers suggestions to enhance the sustainability and competitiveness of these organizations. This research seeks to understand the perspective of active industrial enterprises, or the "living industry," and how this type of tourism can enhance their sustainability and competitiveness. Primary data was collected through a questionnaire administered to 186 SMEs in Portugal. The findings show that most Portuguese SMEs do not engage in IT, mainly due to logistical, security, and strategic concerns. However, the study concludes that IT offers opportunities for SMEs to improve their marketing approaches, societal relationships, business strategies, and human resources.

Keywords: Industrial tourism (IT), Small and medium-sized enterprises (SME), Challenges, Opportunities

1. Introduction

IT is considered a niche market alternative to mass tourism. It is based on industrial heritage (Pardo Abad, 2017), whether in deactivated production facilities (e.g., company museums), in operational production units, or even ongoing projects of industrial facilities (Montenegro et al., 2022) which, due to their specificity, arouse interest due to their educational and tourist attraction (Moral-Moral & Fernandez-Alles, 2019). It includes all types of tourist activities whose primary purpose is related to material and immaterial industrial knowledge. However, the existing literature on this topic still needs to be explored, especially regarding the approach from the perspective of industrial small and medium enterprises (SMEs) (Montenegro & Sousa, 2021). According to Zhang et al.(2020), the research on IT addresses mainly topics related to heritage and the construction of industrial heritage communities, the exploitation of tourism, the protection of industrial heritage, and the use of new technologies, which reinforces the importance of developing more studies in this field. The aim is to present empirical results in the context of industrial enterprises when facing the potential of IT and how the two areas of such different economic sectors - industry and services - can be bridged. Thus, this work has two main objectives: 1) to identify the main challenges of developing IT and integrate this product into industrial SME business strategies, and 2) to point out the main strategic opportunities this tourism product takes to SMEs.

This research makes three main contributions: contributes to a better conceptual delimitation and contextualization from the perspective of industrial SMEs; contributes to understand better the reality of industrial SMEs and the main challenges associated with implementing IT; and identify the primary potentialities and contributions that IT can bring to enterprises and point out strategic guidelines for implementing this product.

2. Exploring Industrial Tourism as a Business Strategy for SMEs

The literature on strategic management has generated different theories over the last 40 years. The industrial organization strategy model, developed by Porter (1985), was pursued in the 1990s with the resource-based view theory (Grant, 1991), which later evolved into competence-based competition and into the dynamic capabilities view (Teece et al., 1997). According to Porter (1985), winning business strategies allow companies to gain a competitive advantage in the market. Crema et al. (2014) identify three main strategies to gain a competitive advantage: i) diversification, ii) cost leadership, and iii) innovation (differentiation).

In the 1960s and early 1970s, diversification was popular among industry and academia (Lichtenthaler, 2005). After many companies failed to diversify in the following years, diversification was considered a destroying value (Lichtenthaler, 2005). Nowadays, business diversification is a strategy that allows companies to expand their core business into other activities (Chan et al., 2019). Since IT is not the main focus of industrial companies, it is essential to understand how this tourism product can be framed into business diversification and innovation, thus creating added value for SMEs.

Diversification strategies can be critical for companies, allowing them to readjust to a constantly changing world as a safety device, reducing risk, and promoting the search for profitable opportunities (Couto et al., 2021). It allows for strategic slack as a reserve of knowledge (Orlando et al., 2018), enabling them to expand into new market segments or to invest in a different business area (Crema et al., 2014), allowing the creation of new product development strategies (Danjou & Koehler, 2007). In the context of globalization, market consolidation, and economic instability, companies must look for new ways to strengthen their market position, reduce business risks, and increase profits (Lee & Nguyen, 2021). Forming and implementing the business diversification strategy partially solves these problems (Li et al., 2021).

There is an academic debate on the impact of diversification on innovation. Depending on several factors, diversification can impact organizations differently and positively or negatively affect innovation. According to Dang et al. (2016), diversification is positive for companies' products and innovation. There is also evidence indicating that a company's diversification strategy can adversely affect research and development (R&D) intensity, yet still maintain a positive relationship with innovation (Dang et al., 2016). According to Orlando et al. (2018), the diversification strategy is both a factor of sunk costs and strategic slack, with strategic slack being a valuable reserve of knowledge that can promote innovation.

Diversification can be an enabler of competitive advantages; however, concentrating on core capabilities rather than diversifying can also be necessary, suggesting a careful analysis of the benefits and risks of the diversification decision (Valtonen et al., 2015).

The interaction between formal and informal institutional environments also influences the choice of a diversification strategy, with the formal environment inhibiting it (Zuo et al., 2023). According to Crema et al. (2014), companies that choose a diversification strategy will most likely use open innovation management practices. The scarcity of resources and skills that often characterizes SMEs frequently serves as a barrier to initiating innovative pathways. Particularly in the case of IT, over the years, several possible objectives have been identified to be achieved through IT, namely the presentation of the quality of its products (McBoyle, 1996); promotional opportunity (Otgaar, 2012; Chow et al., 2017); building relationships with customers (Endo & Kurata, 2015; Chow et al., 2017); increasing brand loyalty (Chow et al., 2017); companies' recruitment strategies (Nielsen, 2012); showing environmental integrity, green attitude (McBoyle, 1996; Rudd & Davis, 1998); developing a differentiation strategy (Endo & Kurata, 2015); increasing profits (Rudd & Davis, 1998); gaining a larger market share (Rudd & Davis, 1998), among others.

According to Duijm & Van Beveren (2022), the relationship between diversification and performance is not direct. It is influenced by the size of the company, concluding that the performance of smaller companies is significantly affected by diversification.

Another critical point is top management's involvement in corporate diversification dynamics. Silalahi & Bimo (2021), when analysing the relationship between diversification and the influence of CEOs, noted that although diversification tends to lower company performance, a higher commitment of the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) tends to eliminate that negative influence (Silalahi & Bimo, 2021). Accordingly, Montenegro & Sousa (2021) stated that implementing a diversification strategy in industrial companies through IT depends on the organizational strategy and culture, reinforcing the importance of the involvement of top management.

In this context, IT emerges as an innovative product for SMEs that could contribute to the strategic differentiation of industrial companies. It does mean the need to think strategically and integrate this product into the company's structure to determine how it can be implemented.

3. Method

3.1 Sample and Data Collection

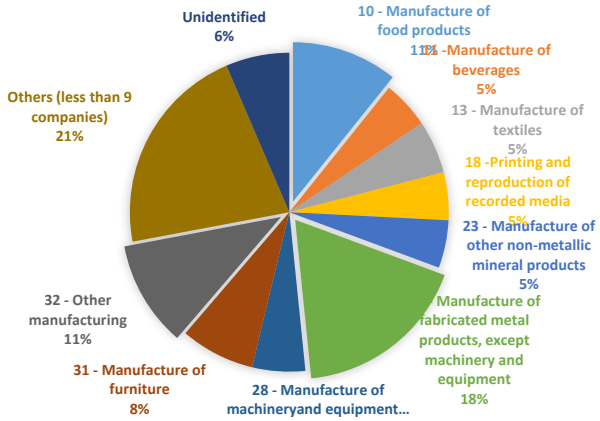
The data was gathered using an online questionnaire distributed via email to all industrial companies in Portugal between May 24 and June 30, 2023, according to the list presented in the SABI (System of Analysis of Iberian Balance Sheets) database, version 134. The sample included all companies with:

- NACE (Statistical Classification of Economic Activities in the European Community) (Rev.2) division from 10 to 32 (Section 3 –Manufacturing);
- E-mail address;
- State: Active;
- Number of employees between 1 and 249 (last year available);

- Net annual profit not superior to €43,000,000 (last year available)

Although there are industrial companies in other NACE sections, section 3 reflects a huge industrial diversity, which is considered fundamental to enriching our study.

Participants were duly informed about the study's objectives and provided informed consent for the utilization of their data. Their participation was voluntary and anonymous. One hundred eighty-six (186) valid responses were obtained. The breakdown of the participants by industry (NACE division) and location in the Portuguese territory (district) are presented in figures 12 and 13.



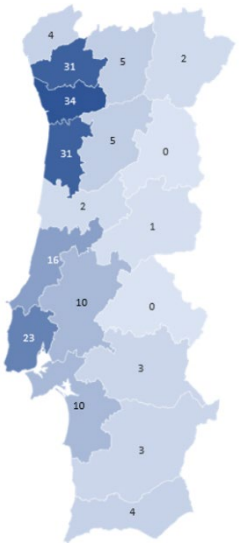
Source: Own elaboration

Figure 1: Industries of the companies in the sample

The industries most prominently represented in the sample (as illustrated in Figure 1) include the manufacturing of metal products, excluding machinery and equipment (NACE 25), food industries (NACE 10), and other manufacturing sectors (NACE 32).

Most of the participating companies are situated in the northern and central coastal districts of the country (figure 2), particularly in Aveiro, Braga, Leiria, Lisbon, and Porto. This is in line with the distribution of the manufacturing industry in Portugal (INE, 2021).

It was possible to have the participation of a company from the Azores, from the district of Ponta Delgada, and one company did not identify its location.



Source: Own elaboration

Figure 2: Location of the companies in the sample

The questionnaire contained five sections, each made up of questions that measured the variables used in this study, namely:

Section 1: questions on the general characteristics of the company, in particular the municipality of the headquarters and the main NACE division in which the company operates.

Section 2: a question on whether the company offers activities related to IT. (Yes or No).

Section 3 (for companies not offering activities in the field of IT): questions about the main reasons for not implementing tourism in their industrial facilities.

Section 4 (for companies offering activities in the field of IT): questions about the way IT is implemented, namely on the following topics: the date IT began and the characteristics of the visits: type of visitors, timetable, type of experiences offered, price and the visitors´ country.

Section 5 (for companies offering activities in the field of IT): questions on the advantages and disadvantages of IT for the company, whether they have a factory store, whether they have seen a return on this investment, and what support and partnerships they have established in the field of IT.

3.2 Measures

This study adopts a quantitative approach, complemented by a descriptive statistical analysis of the data collected (SPSSv.25).

4. Results

A total of 186 industrial enterprises participated voluntarily, 169 (90.86%) without IT and 17 (9.14%) with IT. To better analyze the data collected, the results are presented in two sub-sections: companies with IT and companies without IT.

Throughout the text, the results found are also categorized to present the research findings in a more enriching and systematized way. This categorization considers organizational behavior, respecting the general organizational structure of companies (Robbins et al., 2010). Functional categorization is one of the most popular ways of grouping business activities, but there are other ways, such as by product, by customer, by region, among others. As a matter of organization and the authors' choice, the article adopts functional categorization, specifying different areas such as Strategy, Logistics, Accessibility and Security, among others.

4.1 Portuguese SMEs with IT

In this section, we present how Portuguese industrial SMEs are integrating IT into their business strategy.

The primary spheres of activity among companies that have diversified into IT are notably varied, encompassing domains such as cutlery, metalwork, bicycle manufacturing, wine, quarries, wood flooring, ceramics, and cheese making. Most of them (53%) have factory outlets. Of the IT companies that promote IT, ten chose to reveal their identity, which led us to consult some information on official websites, where we found that only one company advertises IT through this medium.

On average, these companies have received tourists for 15 years, ranging from 1 to 54 years. Demand for IT varies throughout the year, with the months of March, May, June, and July seeing the most significant demand. The months with the lowest demand are January and February.

The activities proposed by the companies are different. Around 76% of the companies offer guided tours of their facilities, which is the most common way companies use to boost IT. This is followed by training sessions and workshops (18% and 11% of companies, respectively). Other types of activities, mentioned less frequently, include free visits, visits to local institutions, wine tastings and access to museums, and points of sale. In most of companies (76.5%), visits are free to visitors.

Around 65% of the companies say that most visitors are Portuguese, while the remaining 35% come from other countries, such as France, Germany, USA, Brazil, UK and Spain, among others.

The analysis of the answers of companies involved in IT enables us to understand what they value most about this tourism product. Table 1 shows the advantages that are more often mentioned by IT companies.

Table 1: Main advantages of IT

Advantages	No. of companies	%
Building relationships with customers	15	88,24%
Presenting the quality of your products	14	82,35%
Strengthen reputation	11	64,71%
Establish trust and understanding in the supply chain	9	52,94%
Promotional opportunity for brands, products, or regions	9	52,94%
Educate and motivate the public on an issue	9	52,94%
Building a sustainable relationship with society	9	52,94%
Increase brand loyalty	8	47,06%
Show environmental integrity, green attitude	7	41,18%
Develop a differentiation strategy	7	41,18%
Increase competitiveness	5	29,41%
Gain a larger market share	4	23,53%
Motivating the company's employees	4	23,53%
Recruitment strategy	3	17,65%

Source: Own elaboration

It is worth noting that almost all companies cite building relationships with customers and presenting the quality of their products as the main advantages of IT. This is followed by other advantages, also in marketing, reputation, trust and promotional opportunities, which are also added benefits in terms of relations with society (52.94%).

The additional benefits highlighted by the companies pertain to the potential for differentiation and heightened competitiveness, advantages that we perceive to be intertwined with the business strategy itself. Moreover, within the realm of human resources, they serve as a strategic approach for both recruitment and employee motivation.

The next table (table 2) shows the disadvantages that are more often mentioned by IT companies.

Table 2: Main disadvantages of IT

Disadvantages	No. of companies	%
Threat of industrial espionage	6	35,29%
Source of "noise" and "disruption" to industrial daily life	5	29,41%
Development costs	3	17,65%
Security risks	2	11,76%
Threat of theft	1	5,88%
Public scrutiny	1	5,88%

Source: Own elaboration

The primary drawback of IT lies in the risk of industrial espionage (35%). Other reasons cited by companies as disadvantages of implementing IT include being a source of "noise" and "disruption" to everyday industrial operations (29%), incurred development costs, security risks, and the potential threat of theft.

When asked about partnerships with external entities, the companies differed, with around 53% saying they had no partnerships in the field of IT. The companies that say they do have partnerships are with town halls, tourism associations, universities, parish councils, government bodies, schools, travel agencies, hotels, and companies in their supply chain.

Around 41% of the companies said that they had obtained a financial return on their investment in diversification through IT. Around 53% of the companies have a factory store where visitors can buy products at the end of their visit. There is a more significant number of companies with factory outlets that have obtained a financial return on their investment compared to companies without factory outlets.

Some suggestions were made, to be specific: improving promotion; creating partnerships; IT is an investment with a return; it strengthens relationships with clients and suppliers; national pride - through IT is possible to show the world that products produced in Portugal have quality, design and innovation; creating hybrid spaces (in the event that it is difficult to access the production space): museum, store, exhibition space.

4.2 Portuguese SMEs without Industrial Tourism

As previously stated, approximately 90% of the surveyed companies lack tailored initiatives for IT. The reasons for this lack of engagement are varied and are outlined in table 3. The reasons provided by various companies to justify the absence of IT on their premises are primarily related to internal factors within the company's operations (87 %), including corporate strategy and culture, costs, production processes, security, and logistics. External factors (13%) include issues such as the risk of theft and industrial espionage, difficulties in accessing the facilities, and the potential for reduced and sporadic demand were also mentioned. The findings align with reasons presented by various authors: security (Lukas, 1999); costs and industrial espionage (Mitchell & Mitchell, 2001; Otgaar, 2012; Botella, 2018); attractiveness of the production process (Otgaar, 2012); corporate strategy and culture not aligned with IT (Montenegro & Sousa, 2021).

Table 3: Reasons why SMEs don't promote IT

Reasons why SMEs don't have Industrial Tourism	% companies
Industrial Tourism is not aligned with the company's strategy and culture	62,13%
Unattractive production process	20,12%
Security risks	18,93%
Threat of industrial espionage	8,88%
Source of “noise” and “disturbance” to daily industrial activity	7,69%
Difficulties in accessing facilities	3,55%
Threat of theft	2,37%
Public scrutiny	1,78%
Development costs	1,78%
Not considered/equalized so far	1,78%
Scheduled and sporadic visits	0,59%

Source: Own elaboration

Based on functional categorization, Logistics, Strategy and Accessibility, and Safety are some of the reasons mentioned by companies, however, depending on which NACE division the company operates in, the company's concern falls more on one reason or another.

The sectors of leather and leather products, as well as machinery and equipment manufacturing, frequently cite reasons related to company logistics to justify the absence of IT initiatives. On the other hand, there are sectors that did not report any concerns about logistics, namely the Food industry; Clothing industry; Wood and cork industry (except furniture); Manufacture of basketry and wickerwork; Manufacture of metal products and Manufacture of furniture and mattresses.

Within logistics, the fact that the production process is unattractive was the most frequently mentioned reason, identified by around 20% of companies.

As for accessibility and safety, 76% of the companies reported no concerns about these issues.

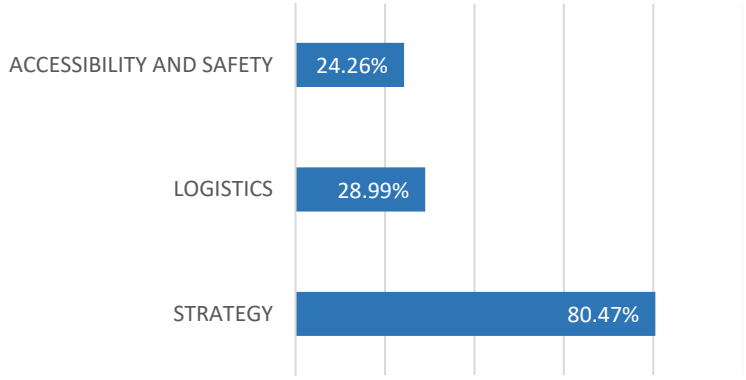
The companies within the Wood and Cork industry (excluding furniture), Manufacture of basketry and wickerwork, and Manufacture of machinery and equipment express the highest levels of concern regarding accessibility and safety issues.

Only 24% of companies say that reasons linked to accessibility and safety prevent them from promoting IT on their premises, with safety concerns being the main one.

Around 80% of companies cited reasons associated with the company's strategy. Companies in the clothing industry and the leather and leather products industry are those that most frequently cite reasons related to business strategy. Around 63% of companies say that IT does not fit in with the company's strategy and culture.

The issue of opportunity and knowledge regarding IT is also cited as one of the reasons for not participating in IT by approximately 17% of the companies.

In general, the reasons why companies don't promote IT on their premises fall into three categories, the most representative of which is associated with the company's own strategy, as shown in the figure below.



Source: Own elaboration

Figure 3: General challenges for implementing IT

Looking at the results from another perspective, we can see that the main reasons for not joining IT are related to factors internal to the company itself, where 93% of companies mentioned at least one reason. As for external factors, most companies (81%) do not point to any reason outside the company for not adopting this tourism product.

5. Discussion

The IT offering in industrial enterprises can take various forms (visits, workshops, museums, among others). IT is a service that can and should be adjusted to the company's characteristics, in line with Montenegro and Sousa (2021), who state that the success of IT depends on the company's strategy and culture.

IT allows companies to engage with diverse audiences, including prospective employees, existing customers, and the wider community, both domestically and internationally, in Portugal and beyond. As Crema et al. (2014) point out, this dynamic of outward-looking relationships can help SMEs, where a lack of resources and skills can be a barrier to innovation, by promoting open innovation management practices.

The process of diversification through IT makes it possible to achieve a wide range of benefits, namely in terms of Marketing, allowing companies to present the quality of their products and strengthen their reputation, establishing trust and understanding of their supply chain, it is also a promotional opportunity for the brand, meeting the benefits identified by several authors such as McBoyle (1996), Chow et al.(2017) and Otgaar (2012). The results found suggest that IT in industrial enterprises can also increase brand loyalty and show the company's environmental integrity, in line with the conclusions presented by McBoyle (1996), Rudd & Davis (1998) and Chow et al. (2017). Through the new service, companies promote a sustainable relationship with society, opening, making themselves known, and promoting industrial knowledge among the population.

In terms of business strategy, IT is considered by the companies surveyed to be interested in boosting a diversification strategy, in line with Duijm & Van Beveren (2022), who state that the performance of smaller companies is significantly affected by diversification, making it possible to increase the company's competitiveness and gain a greater market share.

The benefits of this diversification process also cover the area of human resources, enabling and promoting motivation in the company's employees, who will go from being factory workers to “artists/craftsmen” who have the opportunity to show their knowledge to the outside world, as well as being able to act as a recruitment strategy, in line with the idea mentioned by Nielsen (2012).

The option to diversify through IT may also bring some less positive points that should be analysed by companies to minimize them. Valtonen et al (2015) and Li et al (2021) state that the benefits and risks should be weighed up by industrial companies.

Security risks and the threat of industrial espionage are cited by companies as reasons for not promoting IT. According to Mitchell & Mitchell (2001), using the example of the Kellogg's Company, which closed its cereal factories to visitors after noticing rivals taking photographs during a public visit, the companies surveyed that promote IT also stress their concern about the problem of industrial espionage.

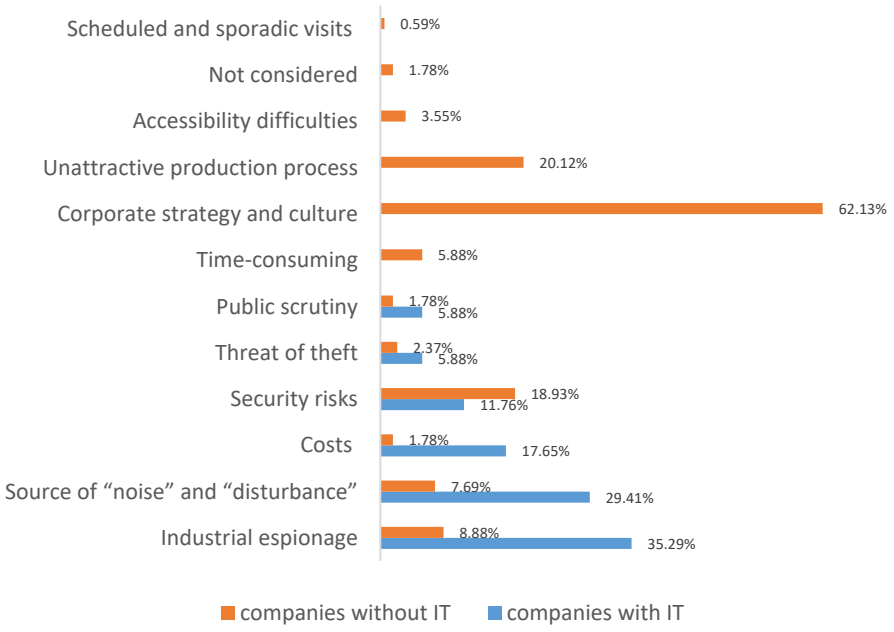
The attractiveness of the production process is also essential when considering the implementation of IT and can be a limiting factor when it comes to joining IT. When identifying companies with the most significant potential for IT, promoters should survey existing companies in various fields, not forgetting the sector to which they belong. Depending on the sector of activity, the obstacles to IT also vary, as highlighted in this study.

There are common concerns to also companies with and without IT, the main ones being associated with industrial espionage, security, and sources of noise, but, on the other hand, there are concerns in companies without IT that do not exist in companies with IT, and vice versa.

The companies that promote IT left encouraging comments, stressing the importance of publicizing and establishing partnerships and making suggestions to minimize some of the inconveniences that may arise when people from outside the companies enter.

The existence of a factory store in some companies could be positive and could promote a financial return on the investment made in IT. Nevertheless, based on our study and considering the limited number of companies with factory stores, definitive conclusions regarding the success or failure of this strategy cannot be drawn. However, the presence of a factory store can be viewed as an additional point of contact with visitors, fostering a connection to the brand and its products. Moreover, it represents an opportunity to sell the company's manufactured goods.

That there are reasons that, after implementing IT, no longer make sense and other limitations that are more significant, depending on whether they have already implemented IT, as shown in the image below.



Source: Own elaboration

Figure 4: Challenges identified by companies with and without IT

The threat of industrial espionage, the source of “noise” and “disruption” to daily factory life, development costs, the threat of theft, and public scrutiny are the reasons most highlighted by companies with IT. We can consider that these concerns are reinforced with the implementation of IT and are not so much emphasized by companies that do not yet promote IT.

On the other hand, some reasons were only listed by companies without IT and were not identified by companies with IT, particularly the need to spend time, IT not being aligned with the business strategy, the production

process not being very attractive, accessibility difficulties, not having been considered so far and the possibility of visits being sporadic, as can be seen in the graph below.

The company's sector of activity may be relevant to whether it is more or less open to IT. There are companies that could pose a greater number of barriers to the integration of IT, such as companies in the leather industry, metal products, and machinery and equipment.

From this study, we can see that the number of companies without IT is relatively high, representing around 90% of the companies surveyed. This demonstrates the high potential for developing this tourism product in Portuguese industrial companies.

As mentioned by Montenegro & Sousa (2021), corporate culture and strategy are essential and must be aligned with IT and vice versa. If IT is not "lived" internally it will be challenging to effectively convey it to the public, and the results may fall short of expectations. This is one of the key reasons identified in the study for the non-implementation of IT by the industrial companies surveyed.

The main barrier identified by companies relates to business strategy and culture, a challenge that, once overcome, ceases to be an issue in companies that have implemented IT. The bodies that promote IT, namely government and municipal associations and organizations, should focus their efforts on the phase of attracting active industrial companies to integrate IT proposals, on the top managers of the companies, understanding the company's culture, its business dynamics and how IT can be presented as a differentiating proposal that meets the company's objectives. After overcoming this first barrier, identified by the companies as the main barrier to implementing IT, it will be possible to analyse, together with the company, the best way to present IT to the internal public (human resources) and the external public (visitors and partners). This way, the first and foremost task of entities that promote IT is to change the culture and strategy of business managers.

Given that the industrial focus is primarily on product production, changing mindsets and establishing a new culture and strategy that incorporates IT is a challenging and complex task. No matter how many potential benefits IT can bring, if it is not integrated into the company's strategy, the benefits can be reduced.

The commitment of top managers to this new form of diversification is fundamental to the approach of IT into companies and to overcoming all the limitations associated with accessibility, safety, and logistics. IT as a form of diversification shows a lot of potential, but as Lichtenthaler (2005) points out, it must be the subject of a clearly defined strategy.

This work conducted highlights of several important insights regarding the relationship between IT and industrial enterprises. However, as mentioned by Valtonen et al. (2015), there are many advantages associated with diversification, but are also associated with concentrating on core capabilities, reinforcing the need for a careful analysis of the benefits and risks of implementing IT in active industrial enterprises.

6. Conclusions

Seeking to shed light on IT from the perspective of industrial companies, a facet that has received limited attention in research, we believe that the findings of this study are quite enlightening regarding the reality of IT in active industrial companies.

There is enormous growth potential for IT within industrial companies, where currently only a small percentage of them actively promote this tourism product. IT can serve as an opportunity for diversification and innovation within these companies.

By understanding the realities of companies that implement IT and the reasons why some industrial companies do not embrace this proposition, we can bridge the gap between the industrial and tourism sectors.

Beyond presenting conclusions, we aim to provoke reflection among industrial company managers so they can analyse the potential of this combined tourism and industrial proposition and its viability within their own companies. These conclusions are also intended for a variety of stakeholders, including policymakers, regional entities, researchers, students, tour operators, and others.

Industrial companies that promote IT identify several positive aspects of IT in the realms of Marketing, Social Impact, Business Strategy, and Human Resources. However, these same companies also recognize some negative aspects of IT, including the threat of industrial espionage, which poses a risk of disruption to daily industrial operations, development costs, security risks, and the threat of theft.

On the other hand, industrial companies that do not implement IT identify the main reasons for not doing so as being related to Security, Logistics, and Business Strategy.

As potential stakeholders who could contribute to the success of IT, companies identify the Municipal Council, Tourism Associations, Universities, Parish Councils, government entities, schools, travel agencies, hotels, and companies within their supply chain.

The daily operations of industrial companies dictate the dynamics of visits to the companies. Most companies adjust visits to their operating hours and production dynamics, without having specific spaces and schedules for this type of activity. This leads us to consider whether this dynamic of instability in schedules and types of visits may be an inhibiting factor for demand. Additionally, there is no significant investment from companies with IT in marketing this tourism product.

The intervention of the government and entities promoting IT in industrial companies should focus on internal company-level initiatives. This could include promoting awareness of IT within companies and with their decision-makers, proposing financial incentives and cost-sharing schemes to support companies in implementing IT, providing a team to assist companies in creating routes, tours, and offerings for tourists without disrupting industrial operations, establishing partnerships with travel agencies to facilitate factory visits, analysing what their target customers prefer and suggesting experiences to be organized and marketed to tourists effectively.

Regarding the company itself, it should review its production process to ensure that trade secrets are not exposed to unintended external observers. Additionally, the company should seek to establish partnerships with specialized travel agencies to create joint experiences. Delegating this responsibility to the company's marketing department can aid in effectively managing customer relations, attracting prospective clients, cultivating brand ambassadors, and harnessing the power of influencers.

Before implementing IT, the company should analyse the potential positive and negative impacts of IT on its operations, including motivational, financial, logistical, and other aspects. This thorough assessment will help the company make informed decisions and mitigate any potential risks associated with IT implementation.

There are many advantages associated with diversification, yet also with concentrating on core capabilities. This work highlights the need for a careful analysis of the benefits and risks of implementing IT in industrial enterprises, and it is essential to define a business strategy that includes this tourism product.

7. Limitations and Future Research

As the primary difficulty encountered, we have the number of participating companies in our study. This may have been due to the shortage of time on the part of company managers or their lack of motivation to take part in this type of study.

As suggestions for future studies, we recommend conducting more empirical research to analyse the partnerships established and their significance for the success of IT. From a business management perspective, maintaining dialogue with companies and understanding their needs is essential to generate valuable insights for future research. It would be interesting to understand the direct economic impact of implementing Industrial Tourism on industrial companies.

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