

## **Senior tourism and cultural diversity in development of territories**

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### **ABSTRACT**

Tourism plays an important role in the culture, in the environment, in social equity, in the well-being of citizens, among others. The Global Code of ethics for tourism of the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO, 1999) considers that tourism “represents a living force in the service of peace, as well as a factor of unity and friendship among peoples of the world” (p. 37).

In this line of understanding, Devile (2009) considers tourism to be “a basic social asset, an essential aspect of the quality of life and should therefore be within the reach of all people” (p. 39).

The growing ageing of the population has led to the emergence of senior universities across regions. Senior universities have improved the quality of life of those who participate actively in the activities provided by them, thus contributing to the social inclusion of the population in the process of development of the territory where they are integrated. Putnam (1993) it is argued that territories which foster participatory and cohesive initiatives will become more efficient (p. 67). Socio-cultural inclusion and innovation is measured by the collective and transformative nature of social relations (André & Abreu, 2006). A plural society should enable civic engagement, essential to ensure the construction of citizenship, social innovation and creative diversity in the territory (Lopes & Rosa, 2016).

The research focuses on senior tourism and senior university attendance practice. Its main objectives are to understand the importance of senior universities linked to municipalities in contexts of quality of ageing, socio-cultural inclusion and promotion of territories. The methodology used was the theoretical revision of the contexts of tourism, universities and patrimonial and tourism education, where questionnaires were carried out at the University of Tomar (Portugal). The study under analysis allows to conclude that tourism and social innovation for the senior university of Tomar, cause social change to those who attend it, contributing to the development of the territory.

**Keywords:** tourism, heritage education, senior universities, territorial development.

## **1 INTRODUCTION**

The recognition of the potential of senior tourism was due to the deepening of knowledge about this market through various studies and conferences and the creation of new tourism products specific to this sector. Currently, the offer of diversified tourist products for senior tourists, promoted by operators or travel agencies from around the world, seek to respond to the different preferences of senior tourists. In Portugal, the Portuguese Tourism Confederation (CTP) has contemplated in its strategies vast programs for this sector, aimed at attracting European senior tourists.

Operators and travel agents from around the world have been adapting products and services by developing products aimed at senior tourists.

There is a growing demand for quality, comfort and safety, as well as a growing demand for entertainment infrastructures which allow relaxation and tranquility. A greater emphasis is given to comfort rather than age (EC, 2017).

Senior tourism is a dynamic market, where the characteristics and consumption patterns of seniors vary over time. In fact, several studies show that seniors in the past are different from today and will tend to be different in the coming decades because they correspond to different generations (Lohmann & Danielson, 2004).

As in the case of senior tourism, senior universities have also assumed an increasingly dominant role nowadays. They are the reflection of the paradigm changes of the senior adult, allowing many possibilities and activities oriented to the senior tourist practice. The proposal of new practices and methodologies is desirable from innovative teaching didactic approaches that try to follow the availability of information facilitating access to knowledge.

Furthermore, the new reality brought about by the ageing of the population, combined with the process of globalization and the economic and social environment, presents new challenges to education. Education plays a key role in ensuring that all citizens acquire the competencies which are needed and will allow them to adapt with flexibility to these changes (Patrício & Osório, 2013, p. 3603).

This study which focuses on senior tourism and senior university attendance as a case of study, aims to: a) know the motivations of the senior for the practice of senior university attendance; b) discuss the role of the senior universities associated to the municipalities; c) how they contribute to the social increase, the quality of the process of ageing people and for the promotion and local development of the territory.

## **2 TOURISM AND SENIOR UNIVERSITY IN THE PROMOTION OF TERRITORIES**

Ageing is a natural and gradual process in an individual's life cycle, with changes at the biological, psychological and social levels. Their knowledge and understanding takes on particular importance given to their influence on the way of life and attitudes of elderly people, and consequently on how they perceive and enjoy from tourism activities (Salgado, 2000). In fact, lifelong education is one of the major concerns of today's world. There is a need for a new intergenerational unity contract (Albuquerque, 2014).

In this context, lifelong learning is also at the heart of UNESCO's mission, since its foundation has played a pioneering role in defending the crucial role of adult education, in the development of society and the promotion of a comprehensive approach to lifelong learning (UNESCO, 2010, p. 9). Everyone has the right to quality and inclusive education, training and life-long learning in order to maintain and acquire skills that enable them to participate fully in society and manage successfully transitions in the labour market (EC, 2017, p. 6).

The Lisbon charter of senior tourism (WTO & INATEL, 1999) refers to some of the basic factors that senior tourists value during a tourism experience in a tourist destination (Table 1). The welcoming conditions, the quality of tourist products of the region and the promotion with foreign clients are also mentioned (Pochet & Schéou, 2002).

1	Security
2	Hygiene and health
3	Environmental issues
4	Independence
5	Accessibility to services and facilities
6	Consumer protection standards

Table 1 - Basic quality factors of senior tourism.

Source: Lopes (2017), adapted from WTO & INATEL (1999).

Another factor valued by senior tourists is the environmental quality and the quality of the landscape of the territory and the possibility of discovering the natural and cultural values that it possesses. Thus, there is a need to develop interventions in the tourist destination, aiming at urban qualification, the protection of natural and landscape resources, and the valorization and recovery of the existing historical and cultural heritage (Handszuh, 1997).

A final unanimous aspect for the quality of senior tourism that will have to be considered by the tourism sector (Table 2) and other agents of the territory is the accessibility. According to Handszuh (1997), these should be anticipated in tourism infrastructures and services.

► Removal of Architectural barriers
► Usage of ergonomic furniture
► Adequate lighting in tourist facilities (namely hotels) and respective access areas
► The use of (travel literature, roadmaps, etc.), signage and symbology for easy reading and understanding
► Easy oral communication, namely, the languages used by foreign tourists

Table 2- Quality of senior tourism.

Source: Lopes (2017), adapted from Handszuh (1997).

The process of research and action on lifelong learning, which senior universities are a good testimony, is closely related to a methodology of learning communities, where they have new objectives, articulating them with cultural tourism products formats. This is a reality that includes

quick changes which require a new governance based on cooperation among various stakeholders (Valdés, Pilz, Rivero, Machado, & Walder, 2014).

This reality of governance, must contemplate the current and future context of Portugal that may become the second oldest country in the world in 2050 (Campos, 2013). These figures have allowed greater visibility to the senior tourism segment and senior universities, making this tourism sector increasingly decisive in the discussion of demographic ageing (Eurostat, 2012).

It is from this new demographic framework which makes perfect sense that senior universities have an increasingly significant role in society.

Currently, almost every country in the Western World feels the need to implement an economic, social and family policy that can change the social balance in crisis.

The promotion of active ageing integrates policies such as the development of activities to optimize individual capacities and maintain the health status of each citizen (Commission of the European Communities, 2011, p. 18). The World Health Organization (WHO) defines active ageing as the process of optimizing opportunities for health, participation and security in order to improve the well-being of people (WHO, 2002, p.13).

In this sense, senior universities should be understood as social intervention organizations, providing their senior students with an active and participatory ageing, stimulating them not only psychologically and physically but also to a cognitive level, as well as improving their integration and active participation in society.

The World Health Organization (WHO) says that quality of life is the individual's perception of his position in life, in the context of culture and values in relation to their goals, expectations, standards and concerns (WHO, 1995, p.4). The quality of life is thus directly dependent on the interaction of the individual with others and with society.

The articulation between the senior university and tourism can contribute greatly to the development of the territory. It is a development that is based on people and local communities. According to Amaro (2003), the development of the territory is reflected in the process of satisfaction of needs and improving the living conditions of a local community, based essentially on their capacities, which assumes the main role in this process and in accordance with an integrated perspective of the problems and responses (p. 26).

The dynamic of territorial development is constantly under construction, however, there is a general understanding that in this dynamic, the participation of citizens/actors, will be a condition of social durability (Deffontaines & Prod'homme, 2001).

The process of development of the territory from different dimensions (environmental, social, cultural, economic, institutional) seeks to highlight the importance of linking senior universities with tourism in deepening knowledge, appreciation and reanimation of local resources (Figure 1).

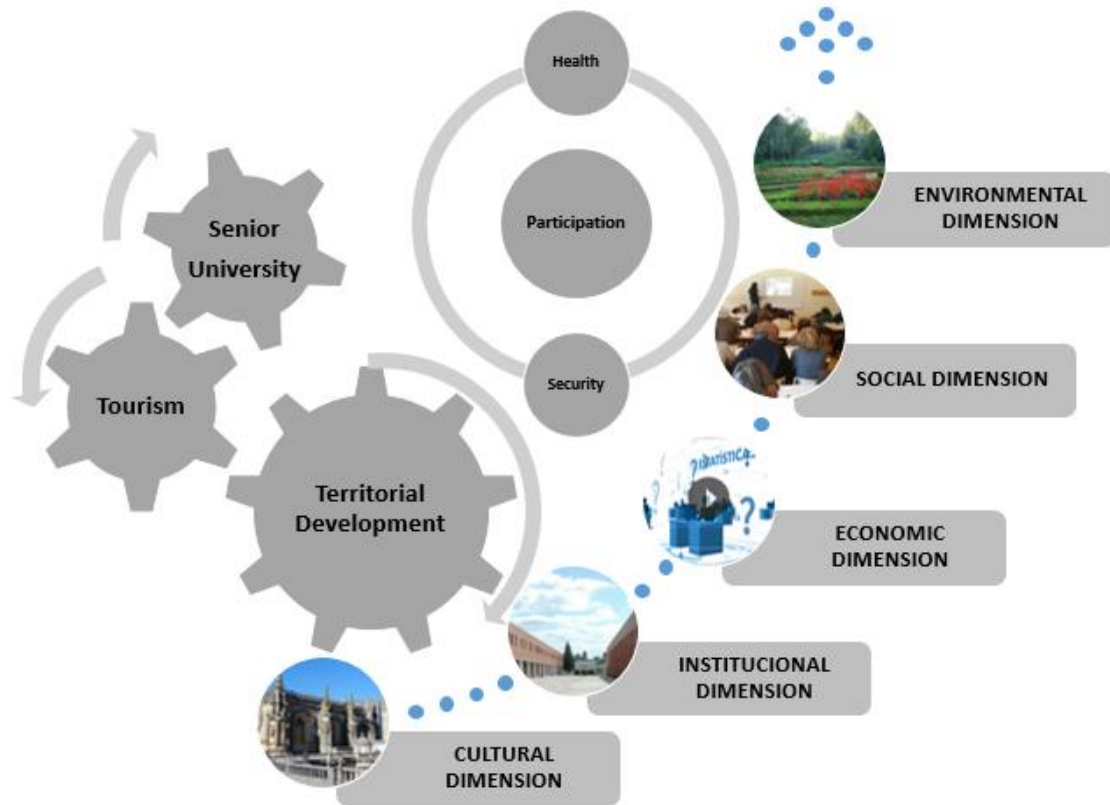


Figure 1 – Tourism and senior university: dynamic of territorial development.

Source: Lopes (2017).

The development of the territory depends on how the population organizes and transforms its territory, in which civic participation has an important role to play (Deffontaines & Prod'homme, 2001).

In this line of interconnection between tourism and senior university, the promotion of the territories, the strategic value of the tourism for the development of the territories, is of particular acuity. At a local level, it represents the creation of wealth, employment and different businesses, thereby attracting people to stay. Other effects are equally important, such as the preservation of local culture, values and identity, able to promote territorial development.

### 3. METODOLOGY

The methodology followed a theoretical revision of the contexts of senior tourism and senior universities (education, ageing and lifelong learning). The present study is based on the senior university of Tomar (suT, Portugal). A questionnaire survey was chosen for showing the quantitative instruments and it was applied to senior students. The proposed survey was divided into three parts, aiming to analyze the importance of the senior university of Tomar to its senior

students and to analyze the importance of the senior university in promoting the development of the territory. Based on these objectives, the questionnaire was divided into three parts: 1) Identification of personal benefits of attendance in the suT; 2) Consideration about the importance of the suT in the promotion of active ageing 3) Contribution of the suT in the territorial development.

#### **4 ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION OF THE RESULTS**

The information contained in this point of the study concerns to the interpretation of the results collected through the analysis of the answers to the questionnaire survey, carried out to the students of the senior university of Tomar. In this sense, when analyzing all the data collected in the field work, we tried to understand and analyze the importance of the senior university of Tomar for senior students and for local development.

The main results are: A) significant attendance of female senior students [75%]; opposing masculine attendance [25%]; B) the age group is predominantly between [59-63], [69-73] and [74-78]; C) their education is the secondary level [54%] and basic education [27%]; D) the majority attend the university of Tomar (usT) motivated by the conviviality [47%]; enrichment of knowledge [33%] and occupation of leisure time [12%]; E) they were aware of the existence of the university of Tomar (usT), through friends [51%] and through information of the municipality [17%]; F) the majority of those who attend the university of Tomar (usT) are satisfied with the activity developed by suT [53%]; G) and consider that the university of Tomar (usT) contributes to local / community development [77%] finally (h) there is unanimity in considering that it has benefits for their personal and social life.

#### **5 CONCLUSIONS**

The growing ageing of the population has provided an increase of tourism and senior universities on several regions. The inclusion of the population in the process of development of the territory through the senior universities promotes the quality of life of those who participate actively in the activities provided by these institutions. The integration of the territory as a privileged space of the development process and the involvement of the local inhabitants in this process is another of its essential peculiarities (Polèse, 1998, p. 218).

It is understood that the existence of senior universities and the senior university of Tomar in particular in this study, allows the emergence of what can be called intentional learning processes. The attendance of the senior university is not characterized as a mere moment of leisure or socializing, but as an appreciation of personal life and social intervention. The increasing number of senior students demonstrates the motivation and permanence of those enrolled in the senior

university, facilitating the perception of the main reasons of their motivation, their attendance, and the increasing overall satisfaction of the senior student.

The promotion of a local service to the community, based on the knowledge of the specific needs of the target public, allows the tourism-cultural programs to be dynamized successfully. Increasing the participation of seniors in social and cultural life and the constant activity, as well as updating the different areas of knowledge is what will dictate the success of senior universities.

The connections established between tourism and universities will be stronger in the management made by these institutions in the territories in which they are integrated. The social innovation is not only verified by the technological side, but by the collective character and the transformative of social relations (André & Abreu, 2006).

The review of the study leads to the conclusion that tourism, cultural diversity and the benefits deriving from the frequency of seniors to the cultural and tourist programs of the senior university of Tomar, brings fresh insights, deepens knowledge already acquired, benefits integration and social change to those who attend and remain at the senior university of Tomar, thus contributing to global citizenship and territorial development.

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