

Management Challenges of a Tourist Destination. Towards the Smartification of a Heritage City (Coimbra, Portugal)

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Coimbra is a tourist destination that had undergone significant changes in recent years, especially after 2013, when the Universidade de Coimbra - Alta and Sofia was inscribed in UNESCO's Representative List of World Heritage. The inclusion of Coimbra in this prestigious list prompts a careful analysis of how the city's management has been carried out in light of the new challenges that this distinction has brought. This resulted in changes in the image, in the local tourist system, in the tourist supply, and the increase of the internationalization of the destination, mirrored in the tourist demand. This recognition and the image of the Coimbra's tourist destination in some of the tourists' places of origin, combined with the university function, promoting specific types of tourism (educational, scientific, events, cultural, and VFR), and the insertion of new structures and equipment, deserve extra attention regarding the city management of this urban cultural destination. Using the Delphi technique, a panel of experts was gathered, representing four components of the tourist destination's ecosystem: public authorities, academics, civil society, and the private sector. Three rounds of surveys were conducted. The management of this destination was determined and evaluated after the inscription in the representative list of the UNESCO World Heritage, the problems and challenges that arise, and the way the city should be promoted. From a 'Smart City' approach, the city's political and functional environment, namely the economy (competitiveness), governance, quality of life, and mobility, were assessed. The preliminary results show that the city as a tourist destination has benefited mainly in dimensions such as demand stimulation, internationalization, economic impact, destination notoriety, urban space qualification, and heritage conservation, rehabilitation, and requalification. Regarding the most significant attributes for Coimbra's configuration as a smart city, the specialists highlighted the innovative spirit, access to health care, tourist attractiveness, national accessibility, cultural facilities and initiatives, and entrepreneurship.

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