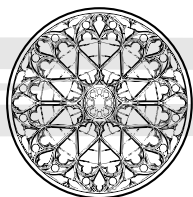


MANAGEMENT, TECHNOLOGY AND TOURISM: SOCIAL VALUE CREATION

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THE ROLE OF SOCIAL TOURISM IN THE SATISFACTION OF ELDERLY CUSTOMERS: THE CASE OF THE VOLTO JÁ PROJECT

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ABSTRACT

Purpose: This research seeks to capture the perceived value given by the elderly to participation in social tourism programmes, and the link between the social tourism experience and their satisfaction as customers of social welfare services. It aims to: 1) study the interviewees' perceptions of the specificities of the programmes; and 2) understand the relationship between the participation in social tourism activities and elderly customers' satisfaction.

Method: To this end, we used the *Volto Já* Project as the main source of information since it is a research project that implements a social business model through a network of Social Economy institutions where it promotes a senior exchange programme. Data is collected on the feedback from participants in the *Volto Já* Project's social tourism activities. The study follows a qualitative design with data collected in semi-structured interviews. The sample is composed of 23 elderly people (14 females, 9 males, average age of 79). Content analysis procedures were used to examine the interviews.

Findings: There is some evidence that participation in social tourism activities increases the users' satisfaction with the organization as welfare service customers,

although this satisfaction depends on corporate image. On the other hand, the satisfaction of participants in the *Volta Já* project was also influenced by factors other than this experience.

Originality/value: This study allowed us to evaluate the experience of the social tourism programme and its effects on customers' satisfaction with the organisation. The insights provided by this feedback bring novel topics to this evaluation, enriching both the current work and future studies.

KEYWORDS:

elderly customers satisfaction; management; qualitative methodology; social tourism; *Volto Já* project

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1. INTRODUCTION

According to the Portuguese National Statistics Institute (2017), it is estimated that the ageing rate will have doubled from 147 to 317 elderly per 100 young people by 2080. This is due to both the decline in the birth rate and the increasing longevity. As a result, the National Social Welfare Services have implemented new and wide-ranging measures (e.g., physiotherapy, psychology, and hairdressing) to support the elderly. However, most of these responses are standardised rather than tailored to users' preferences and they are mainly indoor activities (GEP/MTSSS, 2019).

As social welfare services for the elderly have become more diverse, customer satisfaction with the social and healthcare services provided have acquired increasing importance (Kleinsorge & Koenig, 1991). In fact, measuring customer satisfaction is now widespread in social services and is used as a tool to monitor performance and improve services (Willis, Evandrou, Pathak, & Khambhaita, 2016).

In Portugal, the limited offer of social tourism is provided mainly by the INATEL Foundation (Eusébio, Carneiro, Kastenholz, & Alvelos, 2017; Moita, Graça, Vivas, Leal, & Oliveira, 2019).

However, many individuals are unable to benefit from these opportunities due to their health, socio-economic conditions, or simply because they are institutionalised in social welfare institutions. Social tourism allows social economy institutions to offer a differentiated service which, among other aspects, can contribute to higher levels of customer satisfaction.

Social tourism falls within the scope of social institutions' occupational and personal development activities (Instituto da Segurança Social, 2007a). It can have a positive impact on senior clients through (Morgan, Pritchard, & Sedgley, 2015): 1) increased

well-being; 2) improved self-esteem and 3) higher levels of confidence. Recent studies also noted that the benefits obtained by seniors when participating in a social tourism programme include satisfaction with and loyalty to the institution (Eusébio et al., 2017).

The objective of this study is therefore to study social tourism's role in promoting the satisfaction of senior clients.

The *Volto Já* Project – Senior Exchange Programme was included in the research to fulfil this goal. This main aim of the project is to elaborate a business model for the operationalisation of an exchange programme among Social Economy organisations that promote tourist experiences for seniors (Oliveira, Amaral, et al., 2019).

The proof of concept included the effective exchange of institutionalised seniors, enabling the collection of data that would assess social tourism's role in customer satisfaction.

The study not only strives to contribute to the sparse research in this field, but also to study the consequences of the participation on social tourism activities. Thus, the objectives are to: 1) study the different perceptions of the participants in the exchange programmes offered within the *Volto Já* Project; 2) analyse the impact of tourist experiences among seniors; 3) and assess the relationship between the participation in tourist activities and satisfaction with the organisation.

A qualitative approach was adopted as this allows a more in-depth analysis of the results. Twenty-three interviews were conducted, which were subjected to content analysis (Bardin, 2009).

The remainder of the article is structured as follows: we start by presenting the concept of customer satisfaction with services and its determinants in both social responses for the elderly and senior social tourism; we then describe the *Volto Já* Project and its scope of intervention; the next section is devoted to methodology; section 5 presents and discusses the results; and the final section sets out the main conclusions.

2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1. CUSTOMER SATISFACTION WITH THE SERVICES PROVIDED

2.1.1. Main concepts

For Gustafsson, Johnson and Roos (2005), satisfaction with a service is similar to the customer's general assessment of the quality of the service. According to Ilieska (2013), satisfaction can be understood as a consumer's evaluation of a certain product or service based on his/her previous needs and / or expectations.

The study of satisfaction with services has some specificities that we summarise in accordance with our objectives. Yi (1989) notes that the study of satisfaction with services can be made from two different perspectives – one that sees it as a result, and the other that sees it as a process. The process-oriented perspective is more

appropriate for this study because it considers consumption as an experience and the combination of a set of perceptions and psychological processes. The nature of services and their peculiarities (e.g., intangibility, inseparability) require a distinction to be made between overall or cumulative satisfaction and satisfaction with a specific service encounter (transaction-specific satisfaction) (Boshoff & Gray, 2004).

Recently, research on the concept of satisfaction has expanded to an organisational or brand vision: satisfaction encompasses many transient experiences with the service over time. It can be analysed as the capacity that a company / brand / organisation has to satisfy the client's needs and expectations during the various and different experiences that are being provided (Boshoff & Gray, 2004).

2.1.2. Determinants of customer satisfaction with services

The determinants of customer satisfaction with services may vary according to the type of service in question. According to Tinoco and Ribeiro (2007), "the possible variables that affect the evaluation of the product or service made by the customer" (p. 456) can be considered determinants of customer satisfaction. The main determinants are (Tinoco & Ribeiro, 2007): expectations, perceived quality, perceived value, price, desires, affections / emotions, and the corporate image.

The expectations and perceptions of the performance levels of a product or service influence customer satisfaction (Bolton & Drew, 1991). Customer satisfaction depends on whether or not the expectations of the product / service performance are met (Bolton & Drew, 1991; Caruana, 2008; Rizwan, Umair, Fiaz, & Rashid, 2014).

Perceived quality can be defined as the consumer's judgement about a product's overall excellence or superiority and it differs from objective quality. Perceived quality is an overall appraisal characterised by a high abstraction level and refers to a specific consumption setting (Tsiotsou, 2006; Zeithaml, 1988).

The value perceived is the result of the customer's choice based on the costs and benefits of the experience, including price and quality (Ravald & Grönroos, 1996). When the value perceived by the customer meets his/her needs and desires, the customer appreciates the product / service. When the perceived value does not meet expectations, customer loyalty tends to decrease (Rizwan et al., 2014).

The price corresponds to what the customer sacrifices / abandons to obtain a product (Zeithaml, 1988). It has three components: perceived monetary price, perceived non-monetary price and perceived sacrifice (Zeithaml, 1988). It is a substitution through which value is obtained, whether in the form of a good (tangible) or a service (intangible) (Rizwan et al., 2014).

It is possible to conceptualise desires through different, more or less abstract / subjective approaches, viewing them as the most basic or fundamental needs, as life goals, as an end result, or even as the very means that the individual believes will take him to the final idealised state (Spreng, MacKenzie, & Olshavsky, 1996).

In social psychology, affection is closely related to the concept of intimacy, and it fosters a role in an enduring relationship through the affectionate bond that links the customer and the firm (La & Choi, 2012). Emotions foresee the perception of

physiological stimulus, which is followed by behaviour and psychological consideration. They guide daily lives and can come from external or internal stimuli (from the organism itself) (Tinoco & Ribeiro, 2007).

The corporate image is based on what people associate with the company and the information they have at their disposal such as perceptions, inferences, and beliefs (Martenson, 2007). The corporate image directly influences stakeholders' attitudes and reactions towards an organisation's services, products, and stores (Upamannyu, Bhakar, & Gupta, 2015).

In the case of social welfare services for elderly people, the assessment of customer satisfaction with Social Economy Organisations (SEO) is conditioned by the procedures of the national institutions that regulate the activity. According to the Portuguese Social Security Institute (2007b, 2010a, 2010b), the determinants of satisfaction are: tangible factors (facilities, equipment and signposting); reliability and credibility; technical competence; responsibility and responsiveness; service and communication; responsiveness; trust and security; and empathy.

2.2. SENIOR SOCIAL TOURISM

2.2.1. Social tourism

According to the International Social Tourism Organisation, social tourism comprises any activity that contributes, in a fair and sustainable manner, to greater accessibility to holidays and tourist activities for the entire population.

Cheibub (2012) highlights access to tourism as a primary characteristic of social tourism in more disadvantaged population groups. The author also stresses that this characteristic is the most consistent specificity among the diverse academic literature available.

Social tourism can enhance social inclusion, since it "encourages participation in tourism by all, including people who are economically or otherwise disadvantaged. (...) Such initiatives see assistance to participate in tourism as a universal benefit, but with particular benefit to the economically least well off. The tourism product offered is again standard, the same for disadvantaged and non-disadvantaged groups." (Minnaert, Maitland, & Miller, 2011, p. 405).

2.2.2. Senior tourism

United Nations (2019) data confirm that the world's population is growing older and the over 65s are the fastest-growing age group. In fact, by 2050, one in six people in the world will be over the age of 65 (16%), up from one in 11 in 2019 (9%). The number of people over the age of 80 is also projected to triple, from 143 million in 2019 to 426 million in 2050.

As a result of the demographic and socio-economic evolution, tourism initiatives in numerous countries are beginning to consolidate and further develop responses to the leisure time needs of the elderly. Older people generally have the necessary free

time for tourism activities, so the initiatives aim to respond to the objective and subjective needs of this age group (Le Serre & Chevalier, 2012; World Tourism Organisation, 1999).

The World Tourism Organisation (1999) states that tourism policy makers and professionals should develop programmes that enhance the quality of the senior tourism experience, ensuring:

- *Basic quality factors, such as security, hygiene and health, environmental interests, independence, accessibility to services and rules of consumer protection;*
- *Healthy food, exercise, and other factors which constitute physical wellbeing, as well as those life domains which constitute spiritual wellbeing and the quality of life;*
- *Interaction with the local communities;*
- *The promotion of seniors' networks and senior college activities;*
- *Enrichment of cultural visits, promotion of educational experiences and local heritage;*
- *Spa and entertainment activities, especially outdoors;*
- *High standards of service, structured social activities, flexibility in programmes, an adequate pace for physical activities, as well as fair and clear information;*
- *Internal auditing and evaluation for senior tourism quality standards;*
- *Immediate introduction of tariffs for seniors by air, sea and land (rail and coach) transport carriers, especially on a regional basis such as within the European Union. (p. 2).*

According to the World Tourism Organisation (1999), senior tourism programmes resulting from public and private partnerships, or initiatives by public, civic and social economy organisations should meet certain objectives, including:

- a) Encourage involvement in tourist activities as a response to the current situation of social exclusion;
- b) Improve the quality of life of elderly people through the benefits of access to leisure periods;
- c) Contribute to the creation of a new and diversified tourism market, thus strengthening the economy and creating new jobs, and, consequently, being an agent of social cohesion;
- d) Contribute to peace, social tolerance and solidarity through the sharing of memories, interactions and travel among generations;
- e) Use tourist facilities and equipment more effectively during low seasons and in the most economically disadvantaged regions.

Benefits obtained by joining in trips organised by social tourism programmes can have a positive impact on older people's subjective wellbeing and levels of social engagement as well as increase their self-esteem and confidence (Morgan et al., 2015).

According to the study by Eusébio, Carneiro, Kastenholz, and Alvelos (2017), social tourism programmes can reduce seniors' isolation by: providing opportunities to socialise with friends, relatives and local people; increasing their quality of life through cultural enrichment, escape and relaxation; and improving their health.

3. VOLTO JÁ PROJECT

The *Volto Já* Project has built a partnership programme between Social Economy organisations that offers exchange activities for institutionalised seniors, and develops cultural, tourist and artistic experiences. It has a senior social tourism business model which targets elderly people in unfavourable economic circumstances, or who do not have family and / or friends that can accompany them, and allows them to travel and / or enjoy holidays (Oliveira, Leal, et al., 2019).

The main objectives of the project are to (Oliveira, Leal, et al., 2019, p. 6):

- (i) *promote active ageing and improve the quality of life (well-being, life satisfaction, happiness, etc.) of institutionalised seniors;*
- (ii) *develop a social tourism business model aimed at institutionalised seniors in nursing homes / ERPI or day care centres in the Alentejo region;*
- (iii) *develop social tourism packages tailor made to the needs of institutionalised seniors, in partnership with Social Economy entities; and*
- (iv) *develop a computer platform that allows Social Economy institutions to join the senior exchange programme, disseminate the socio-cultural experiences offered and establish partnerships that lead to the exchanges between SEO.*

4. METHOD

4.1. SAMPLE

The sample selected for the study comprises twenty-three participants in the *Volto Já* Project between June and November 2019. Six mobilities were held to date, with six Social Economy organisations. All members are seniors and 28 applied of the six Social Economy Organisations that are partners of the *Volto Já* Project, namely: Santa Casa da Misericórdia de Santarém, Santa Casa da Misericórdia in Santiago do Cacém, Santa Casa da Misericórdia de Sines, Santa Casa da Misericórdia da Chamusca, Associação Protectora e Abrigo dos Velhos Trabalhadores de Montemor-o-Novo and Centro Social Cultural e Recreativo do Bairro da Esperança.

The sample is composed of 23 elderly people. The sociodemographic characteristics of the sample are:

- Age: between 60 and 98 years, five of whom (22%) in the 60 – 70 age group, six (26%) in the 71 – 80 years age group, ten (43 %) in the 81 – 90 age group and the remaining two (9%) in the 91 – 98 age group.
- Gender: fourteen (61%) female and nine (39%) male.
- Marital status: twelve (52%) are widowed, seven (31%) are single, and four (17%) married.
- Education: five (22%) have no education, thirteen (57%) have 4 years education, four (17%) have 6 years education and one (4%) has 9 years education.
- Time in the organisation: six (26%) of the interviewees have been in the organisation for less than 6 months, four (17%) between 7 and 12 months, four (17%) between 13 and 24 months, two (9 %) between 25 and 36 months and seven (31%) for 37 months or more.
- Reasons for being in the organisation: six respondents (26%) joined as they lived alone, eight (35%) due to illnesses, five (22%) due to the illness of a relative, three (13%) not to become a burden for their family and one (4%) due to difficulties in the relationship with family members.
- Number of children: four participants (17%) have no children, four (17%) have one child, eight have two children, four (17%) have three children and finally three (13%) have four children.

4.2. DATA COLLECTION INSTRUMENT

A semi-structured interview was applied as the data this provides values each individual's system of thought, cognitive processes, value systems and representations, emotions, affectivity which are revealed unconsciously as the interview unfolds (Bardin, 2009). The interview guide was based on the literature review, the Satisfaction Assessment Questionnaires provided by the Social Security Institute (2007b, 2010b, 2010a) and the objectives of the study, namely in the evaluation of the tourist experience and its impact on satisfaction with the organisation in which the participant is institutionalised.

The speech of each interviewee was systematised and subsequently analysed. The interviews were recorded on audio support with the authorisation of the organisation and each individual, and later transcribed in full.

The interview guide (Table 1) includes questions on the context of tourist experiences before and after the individual's institutionalisation, the impact of tourist experiences on their quality of life, the evaluation of the different aspects of senior exchange promoted by the *Volto Já* Project and, finally, the perceived changes in satisfaction with the organisation as a result of their participation in the exchange.

Table 1 – Interview Guide

1. Did you use to go on trips or other tourist and leisure activities before coming across this Organisation?
1.1. If not, why?
1.2. If so, what was your motivation for these trips or activities?
1.2.3. What activities did you perform?
2. Since you have been connected to the Organisation, have you taken any trips or done any tourist and leisure activities?
2.1. If not, why?
2.2. If so, what was your motivation for these trips or activities?
2.2.3. What activities did you perform?
3. When you participate in the Organisation's tourist and leisure activities, how do you feel about the Organisation?
3.1. Why?
4. When you participate in the Organisation's tourist and leisure activities, do they have an impact on your quality of life?
4.1. In what way?
5. Do you think your quality of life would improve if you had more opportunities to enjoy tourist and leisure experiences?
5.1. Why?
6. How do you feel about the monitoring by the technicians who received you?
6.1. Why?
7. And how do you evaluate the technicians who accompanied you?
7.1. Why?
8. Did you feel integrated with the other participants in the exchange?
9. How do you evaluate the social experience provided by mobility?
10. How do you rate the facilities where you stayed overnight?
10.1. Why?
11. What is your opinion of the transport used during mobility?
11.1. Why?
12. What do you think of the meals prepared by the host Organisation?
12.1. Why?
13. In general, how do you evaluate the programme of activities you joined?
14. Were you satisfied with the senior exchange activity programme?
14.1. Why?
15. If you could do this again, would you do so?
16. Would you recommend a friend of yours to participate in a senior exchange programme?
17. Has your participation in this senior exchange programme made you feel more satisfied with your Organisation?
17.1. Why?

4.3. CODING

In line with the sequential organisation of the content analysis model proposed by Bardin (2009) – pre-analysis, material exploration and treatment of results and interpretations, the following were considered:

- 1) As a unit of record: the topic, breaking down each interviewee's speech according to a criterion of choice and delimitation guided by the dimension of analysis. The dimension of analysis is determined by the intended goal, dividing the different recording units of the study into categories. The topic allows us to study the motivations of opinions, values, beliefs, attitudes, and is commonly used for the analysis of open responses (Bardin, 2009);
- 2) As a rule of enumeration: the presence / absence of content;
- 3) As a categorisation of content: the "collection", where the conceptual title of each category is only obtained after the organisation of the set of registration units that compose it, and each dimension is generated from the grouping of categories relating to the same concept.

5. RESULTS

Table 2 presents the categorical systematisation of: a) all the registration units obtained by the context units in categories and b) the categories formed into dimensions of analysis. Each dimension of the analysis corresponds to the respective interview question. The content obtained is organised in tables and is analysed further in the discussion section.

Table 2 – Inductive category formation

Dimension	Category	Recording Unit
D1: Tourist experience prior to integration into the Organisation	No previous tourist experience	Work
		Solitude/Isolation
		No reason
		Health Limitations
	Has previous tourist experience	Family Activities
		Leisure Activities
		New Experiences
		Excursions
		Social Tourism Activities
D2: Tourist Experience prior to integration into the organisation	Volto Já Project	Project Volto Já
	Tourist experience exclusive to Volto Já Project	Activities not specified
		Activities offered (e.g., touristic activities)
		Beach Tourism
	Feelings	Well-being

D3: Value given to the Organisation after participating in tourist activities	Evaluation of services	Happiness
		Satisfaction
		Ambiguous feeling
		Contentment
		Recognition of the good service
		Motivation
		Competence
D4: Perception of impact of tourist experiences on quality of life	Physical Impact	Excellence of the monitoring
		Physical impact
	Emotional Impact	Well-being
		Relaxation
		Joy
		Contentment
		Satisfaction
		Motivation
		Enthusiasm
		Relief
	No impact	Felt no change
D5: The impact of more frequent touristic experiences on quality of life	More frequent touristic experiences would improve quality of life	Satisfaction
		Motivation
		Enthusiasm
		Happiness
	Quality of life does not depend on the frequency of tourist experiences	Satisfaction with current quality of life
		Satisfaction with the effect of the current tourist activities
D6: Evaluation of the partner-organisation's staff during the senior exchange	Staff member's characteristics	Health Limitations
		Excellence
		Cheerfulness
	Staff member's actions	Friendliness
		Competence
		Care
		Hospitality
	Feeling	Satisfaction
		Pride
D7: Evaluation of the Institution's staff during the senior exchange	Staff member's characteristics	Excellence
		Kindness
		Friendliness

		Education
		Affability
		Joy
		Dedication
	Feeling	Satisfaction
		Recognition
	Staff member's action	Competence
	Relationship	Compatibility
		Friendship
		Familiarity
D8: Inclusion in the group of participants in the senior exchange	Experience	Excellence
	Feeling	Inclusion/integration
		Well-being
	Relationship	Friendship
D9: Socialising with the participants in the senior exchange	Experience	Excellent/outstanding
		General satisfaction
		Ambiguous feedback
	Feeling	Enthusiasm
		Motivation
		Contentment
	Relationship	Friendship
		Familiarity
D10: Evaluation of the transportation during the senior exchange	People in charge	Competence
		Driving
		Monitoring
	Vehicle	Excellence
		Dissatisfaction
		Comfort
	Monetary aspects	Free service
	Journey	Safety
	Route	Adequacy
D11: Evaluation of the accommodation during the senior exchange	Cleanliness and tidiness	Excellence of cleanliness and tidiness
		Satisfaction with cleanliness and tidiness
	Tangible goods/Material resources	Excellence of tangible goods/Material resources
		Satisfaction with tangible goods/Material resources

		Dissatisfaction with tangible goods/Material resources
		Extreme dissatisfaction with tangible goods/Material resources
	Experience of overnight stay	Satisfaction
		Dissatisfaction
D12: Evaluation of the meals during the senior exchange	Food	Satisfaction
		Feeding habits
	Experience	Satisfaction with no explanation
		Excellence
	Place	Landscape
D13: General Evaluation of the activities programme during the senior exchange	Activities	Excellence
		Satisfaction
		Productive
	Interpersonal Relationship	Monitoring
		Happy
	Locations	Interest
		Motivation
D14: Perception of satisfaction with the activities programme for the senior exchange	Locations/Activities	Attractiveness
	Attitude	Repetition
	Interpersonal Relationship	Familiarity
		Satisfaction with the interaction
	Programme	Excellence
		Motivation
		Suitability
D15: Repetition of the senior exchange	The senior would like to repeat the experience	Statement of repetition
	The senior would like to participate but has limitations	Health limitations
D16: Would recommend the senior exchange tourist experience	Would recommend the exchange	Had recommended the exchange
	Would recommend the exchange with justification	Autonomy
		Interest/Willingness
D17: Influence of the participation in the senior exchange on satisfaction with the Institution	Greater satisfaction with the organisation due to participation in the exchange	Attractiveness of the locations/Exchange activities
		Recognition
		Will repeat in future
		Well-being
		Interpersonal Relationships
		Happy

Staff competence	
Happiness	
Satisfaction with the organisation independent of the participation in the senior exchange	Satisfaction unaltered

When asked about taking trips or other tourist and leisure activities before joining the organisation (Table 2; dimension 1), some of the respondents said they had had no previous tourist experience, while others reported having previously enjoyed some tourist activities. The main reasons given for having no prior experience are: 1) work, 2) socially isolation or 3) health limitations. Those with tourist experience (the majority of responses) referred to the following main activities and / or underlying motivations: family activities, leisure activities, new experiences, excursions, and social tourism activities.

For dimension 2, it was found that eleven of the twenty-three respondents had no experience other than through the *Volto Já* Project (category one). The remaining interviews form the second category and they report: unspecified activities (e.g. “We went to several” (...). “; E12,” we have been to many places.”; E19); activities such as tourist experiences without overnight stays; and beach tourism.

Dimension 3 (Table 2), namely “Value given to the organisation after participating in tourist experiences” refers to the responses to the questions “When you participate in the Organisation’s tourist and leisure activities, how do you feel about the Organisation? Why?”. Two categories emerged: internal perceptions, such as feelings and emotions, and perceptions and analysis of external factors, such as appraisals of the organisation and its services.

In the first category (Table 2; dimension 3) the interviewees linked the following feelings to the organisation as a result of participating in its tourist and leisure activities: well-being, happiness, satisfaction, ambiguity, recognition of the good service, motivation. The appraisal of the institution and / or service (2nd category) is decoded into: competence, excellence of the monitoring, and relevance of services.

For Dimension 4, on how the tourist experiences impacted the respondents’ quality of life, the registration units obtained were: 1) physical impact, 2) emotional impact, 3) no impact. The physical impact encompassed responses on physical changes (e.g. “Head and body. I feel better”; E1). The category with the largest number of statements was for the emotional impact where respondents referred to the following feelings and emotions: well-being, relaxation, joy, contentment, satisfaction, motivation, enthusiasm, relief (e.g. “It’s a relief to do something different from the normal routine “; E20). In the third category, respondents felt the tourist experience had no impact on their quality of life.

When asked whether more frequent tourist and leisure activities would improve their quality of life (Table 2; dimension 5), three types of response emerged: (a) yes, it would improve the quality of life; (b) no, because the quality of life does not depend on participation in tourist and leisure experiences; (c) no, because it would lower the quality of life. In the first category, which had the most answers, more frequent tourist

activities could improve quality of life because these activities foster positive feelings such as satisfaction with one's life, encouragement, enthusiasm and happiness (e.g. "Because I was even happier"; E7).

In the second category, tourist activities do not affect the quality of life because: 1) the interviewee's quality of life is already satisfactory (e.g. "The quality of life I have is good. "; E4); 2) the quantity and quality of the current experiences are already satisfactory.

The third category encompasses answers from seniors who feel their quality of life might deteriorate if there were more tourist activities because they are not healthy enough to participate in these activities (e.g. "No, because I no longer have the health for that "; E10).

Regarding the evaluation of the partner-organisation's staff during the senior exchange (Table 2; dimension 6), the registration units were organised according to: 1) the staff member's characteristics that were mentioned, 2) staff member's actions, 3) the interviewee's feelings and emotions about the staff member.

In the first category, the registration units highlight: excellence, joy, friendly (e.g. "Nice, very good."; E5). The second category refers to: competence, care, and hospitality (Example: "Nobody could give a better welcome"; E11). The third category consists of interviewees' feelings about employees, such as satisfaction and pride (e.g. "we feel proud to be welcomed like this."; E13).

Dimension 7 (Table 2; dimension 7), corresponds to the question "How do you feel about the monitoring from the staff who welcomed you? Why?" and it includes four categories: 1) perceived characteristics of employees; 2) interviewees' feelings or emotions towards the employee and his/her monitoring; 3) the employee's performance; 4) relationship between the interviewee and the employee.

The interviewees gave the most responses on the perceived characteristics of the employee as an individual and referred to: excellence, kindness, friendliness, education, affability, cheerfulness, dedication. The main feelings expressed were satisfaction and recognition. With regards to how the employees carried out their work, seniors had a perception of competence. The relationship between the senior and the employee was described as compatible, friendly, and familiar.

The responses to the question "Did you feel integrated with the other participants in the exchange?" (Table 2; dimension 8) can be grouped into three categories: experience, feeling, and relationship. Respondents felt they were integrated in the group (e.g. "Everything, everything flawless."; E7).

The second category (feelings) was mentioned most by the interviewees and they confirmed the feeling of integration and well-being (e.g. "I felt good."; E5). The participants felt that they were treated as friends (e.g. "They are very friendly."; E2).

Dimension 9 on the socialisation of the participants in the senior exchange (Table 2; dimension 9) corresponds to the results obtained to the question "How do you evaluate the social experience provided by mobility?". The responses were divided into three categories: 1) those who described the living experience as excellent, satisfactory or neither positive nor negative (e.g. "Look, exceptional"; E11); 2) those

who expressed feelings on the interaction between participants, such as enthusiasm, encouragement and contentment (e.g. "It makes a person more alive, in even better spirits"; E7); 3) those who evaluate the socialisation by the resulting relationship, such as friendship and familiarity (e.g. "As if they were one of the family."; E1). The registration unit most often used was "general satisfaction".

Dimension 10 refers to "Evaluation of the transportation during the senior exchange" (Table 2; dimension 10) obtained from the answers to the question "What is your opinion of the transportation used during mobility? Why?". It covers the perceptions regarding: those in charge of for transport (driver/accompanying person), the vehicle, monetary aspects, the experience of the trip and the route taken. Most responses were about the people in charge and the vehicle.

The people in charge of transport were appraised on competence, driving and monitoring. The feelings expressed about the vehicle, were excellence, dissatisfaction, and comfort. The transport was also given a monetary evaluation, namely it was a free service. The trip as a whole was described as safe and the route as adequate.

Dimension 11 – Evaluation of the accommodation during the senior exchange – (Table 2) details what stands out most about the accommodation for participants: cleanliness and tidiness, tangible goods/material resources and experience of the overnight stay.

In this dimension, the cleaning and tidiness of the spaces were rated through excellence (e.g. "Everything flawless, hygienic, impeccably cleaned."; E7), and satisfaction or dissatisfaction (e.g. "Everything was really very tidy."; E9).

The tangible goods/material resources (Table 2; dimension 11) were categorised for their excellence (e.g. "A first class hotel."; E12); satisfaction with the tangible goods/material resources (e.g. "A gorgeous house big, good, and it is a home, "; E1); dissatisfaction (e.g. "I mean it was not the best accommodation... It was a quite low quality."; E2); and extreme dissatisfaction (e.g. "Awful."; E3).

For the last category in dimension 11, the experience of the overnight stay (Table 2), the interviewees referred to satisfaction (e.g. "Good. (...) We slept well."; E4) and dissatisfaction (e.g. "I am used to sleeping alone in my small bedroom and accompanied (...) I could not sleep."; E21).

Despite some negative evaluations, the vast majority of the participants were satisfied and evaluated the accommodation as excellent.

The seniors' assessment of the meals (Table 2; dimension 12) included three categories: 1) food and eating habits (e.g. "Food was good."; E9); 2) the general assessment of the meal as an experience, expressed as excellent and satisfactory (e.g. "All the best."; E12); 3) the space and surrounding landscape (e.g. "Just to be eating and looking at the sea. Eating and looking at the sea through the window ..."; E1). The overall perception of the meals was that they were satisfactory.

The evaluation of the activities programme during the senior exchange (Table 2; dimension 13) highlights: the activities, the interpersonal relationship generated and the location of the activities. In relation to activities, the evaluations obtained in the registration units were excellence, satisfaction and productive (e.g. "I think it was good, it's fruitful."; E9). The relationship was expressed through monitoring and

happiness (e.g. "Everyone was happy, everyone ..."; E19); The locations were defined according to their interest and motivation (e.g. "they tried to take us to interesting places, explain to us what used to be there, what it is now ..."; E11). It should be noted all the respondents' comments in this dimension were positive.

Dimension 14 (Table 2) sets out the participants' responses on their satisfaction with the activities programme, which were ordered according to references to: locations / activities; attitude; interpersonal relationship; and programme. The attractiveness of the locations/activities, stood out (e.g. "Besides being pretty, I went to see something very old things, things that, you know, I would never have seen if I hadn't gone there."; E10). On attitude, participants expressed a desire to repeat the programme (e.g. "I still want to go there again."; E19). The interpersonal relationship was manifested through familiarity and satisfaction with the social interaction (e.g. "The people were impeccable. Impeccable. Impeccable, impeccable and friendly people, from the heart."; E7). The programme was described through its excellence, motivation, and adequacy (e.g. "Because, of course, it couldn't have been better."; E18). This dimension confirmed the positive evaluation all interviewees gave of the activities programme.

The seniors' responses on their desire to repeat the exchange generated dimension 15 – Repetition of the senior Exchange (Table 2). The first category is associated with the desire to repeat: e.g., "Without a doubt." (E10). The second category expresses the repetition of the experience if there were no health limitations: "I would, if... If my health was good and if I could walk and... Of course" (E18). Where there were no health restrictions, all participants would repeat the exchange.

The responses for dimension 16 (Table 2) "Would recommend the tourist experience of the senior exchange" are divided into unequivocal recommendation to a friend and recommendation but with justification (e.g. "To a friend? I already recommended to my daughters (laughter)" (E11); "I think so. If she wanted to."; E10). All respondents would recommend the experience, taking into consideration the friends' interests and health.

When the seniors were asked "Are you more satisfied with your Organisation after participating in this senior exchange? Why?", their responses fell into two categories: 1) greater satisfaction with the Organisation due to participation in the exchange and 2) participation in the exchange did not influence their satisfaction with the Organisation.

In the first category, the participants' satisfaction with the Organisation is confirmed through: 1) interest in the exchange sites/activities (e.g. "From us going there, I mean, nobody has ever seen anything like that... Never. So, I was satisfied with everything. Everything I saw."; E1); 2) recognition of the Organisation (example: "Yes. Because if it wasn't for the Organisation I would never have gone there."; E11); 3) repetition of the experience (e.g. "Yes. (...) And now we just have to do some more trips."; E3); 4) feeling of well-being (e.g. "Yes. (...) And I feel good. I feel good."; E5); 5) experienced interpersonal relationship (e.g. "It's a unity, that we can connect with people, isn't it? It's like that. Us, from here and there, we connect, it's a satisfaction to find this one and that one, and hug and all, it was very good. "; E6); 6) happiness (e.g. "I feel so happy."; E7); and 7) the seniors value the organisation's competence (e.g. "Give a lot

of value to the organisation. We realize who we are dealing with"; E14). This category received the most responses: nineteen of the twenty-three respondents say they were more satisfied with the organisation following the tourist experience.

The second category specifies situations in which interviewees' satisfaction or dissatisfaction with the Organisation was unchanged by participating in these activities. This perception results from the awareness that the Organisation itself and the respective provision of day-to-day services remained the same – e.g., "No. I'm not better or worse. I came here out of necessity." (E4), "No, no ... I also felt good before going to this gathering." (E9), "Maybe not more. I feel satisfied as I always do. (...) They do what they can and what I ask them to do, they do. There they did what they could." (E20), "No. Because the Organisation remains the same." (E21).

6. DISCUSSION

By using the interview as an instrument of data collection, we were not only able to register the interviewees' discourse, but also record the non-verbal language and emotional intensity in each answer and topic addressed.

The results reveal the following: a) some seniors had not enjoyed any tourist experiences until entering the institution, and the organisation was able to fill this gap; b) in the case of seniors with previous tourist experiences, for some the only tourist experience at the organisation was promoted by the *Volto Já* Project.

In addition, the *Volto Já* Project exchange was the only tourist experience some seniors had ever had (before and after their institutionalisation). The findings show that this was for economic or social reasons (isolation/loneliness) as we see in Morgan et al. (2015), or due to health problems; this confirms the relevance of social tourism and its benefits for seniors included in such programmes (Eusébio et al., 2017; Minnaert et al., 2011).

The interview proved to be particularly revealing to the topics mentioned above as it allowed interviewees to express themselves freely and highlighted the specific importance of the *Volto Já* project experience in their lives.

In general, respondents valued the organisation more as a result of their participation in tourist activities. References to the organisation's excellence and their satisfaction with it were evident in the verbal and non-verbal discourse, as was the feeling of recognition for the work done to foster their well-being and their gratitude for the opportunity given.

Enabling institutionalised seniors to participate in tourist activities can thus enhance the corporate image as their expectations are exceeded (Bolton & Drew, 1991; Caruana, 2008; Rizwan et al., 2014; Upamannu et al., 2015)

Based on the Runa and Miranda (2015) scale of feelings and emotions, the interviewees' feelings on how they value the Organisation as a result of the tourist experiences also makes them more satisfied customers (Tinoco & Ribeiro, 2007).

One of the seniors expressed the desire to participate in more tourist experiences and recognised that this would lead to greater satisfaction with the institution – e.g., “there should also be more activities” (E6).

The perceived impact of the tourist experiences on quality of life is also found in previous studies, which note how vacation and leisure time foster physical activity and social interaction (Morgan et al., 2015; Quinn & Stacey, 2010)

The interviewees who acknowledged the impact of these experiences on their quality of life emphasised the positive effects of getting away from the daily routine, especially on an emotional level and the vast majority of respondents said it brought relief, relaxation, enthusiasm and expectation/stimulus .

The enduring impact of the experience must be stressed. Even though the interview took place sometime after the tourist experience, some participants were still deeply moved by the recollection and were enthusiastic about collaborating with their own report.

This long-term physical or emotional impact is illustrated by one of the interviewees’ comments: “I am alone and when I think about these things and it fills me” (E15). This data underpins the “studies that emphasise how the benefits of social tourism extend beyond the immediate holiday experience and into participants’ daily lives” (Morgan et al., 2015, p. 4).

Individuals who consider quality of life as being strictly associated with health may not perceive the impact of the tourist experience as relevant. In situations where the tourist experience *per se* did not change the interviewee’s quality of life it was categorised as having no impact.

Health is one of the main aspects dictating the different perceptions and it is given as a constraint to participating in social tourism programmes. As evidenced in the study by Eusébio et al. (2017), it represents a vulnerability that determines the frequency of participation in tourist activities and hence the increase or decrease in the quality of life.,

The short duration of the experience meant there was relatively little impact on physical health. However, most of the interviewees considered the effect on their psychological, emotional, and social well-being to be relevant and they referred to the wave of positive feelings and emotions about the experience, themselves, and the organisation.

Evidence from dimension 5 demonstrates that more frequent tourist activities lead to feelings of individual satisfaction, stimulus, enthusiasm, and happiness and therefore a better quality of life.

A quite positive evaluation was given of the partner institution’s employees, be it in terms of characteristics, performance or dominant feelings e.g., “Really flawless, like stars in the sky.” (E7), “Really friendly, very good.” (E5).

The evaluation of the SEO employees where the interviewees are institutionalised was determined by the prior relationship between the interviewee and the employee e.g.

"Because I get along very well with the employee" (E2); "They were our friends" (E10); "They are part of the family here" (E12).

Based on the interviewees' responses, expectations were exceeded in relation to feelings and emotions inspired, performance and the employee/senior relationship so that an atmosphere of trust, security and familiarity was created.

Dimensions 6 and 7 on the host and partner institution staff also show customer satisfaction in relation to the different social welfare services, such as reliability, technical competence, responsibility, responsiveness, service and the communication (Instituto da Segurança Social, 2007b, 2010a, 2010b).

Dimension 8 addresses integration in the senior exchange group. According to the interviewees, integration was excellent and there was no record of negative feelings, poor inclusion or total lack of integration in the group. A feeling of full integration can bring benefits to the individual, as can be seen in the results of Morgan et al. (2015, p. 10) "Being with people of a similar age on this break enabled the clients to share stories and to create a common sense of identity and affirmation of self".

The experience allowed participants to build bonds and close relationships, and they even expressed the intention to nurture these relationships by sending letters, making video calls and exchanging cards at festive seasons.

It can be concluded from the integration and socialisation dimensions that a person can feel integrated and at the same time not necessarily evaluate the socialising positively. The two aspects are understood differently. In addition, these two dimensions impact individuals positively since "group involvement is a significant psychosocial factor in improving personal confidence, satisfaction with life and the ability to face problems" (Andrade et al., 2014, p. 46).

In transportation, meals and accommodation, the determinants of customer satisfaction were clearly perceived quality, expectations, price and corporate image s. However, dissatisfaction with one of these services did not imply general dissatisfaction with the exchange experience, nor with the organisation in which they are institutionalised.

It is also noted that the senior customers' satisfaction in the dimensions evaluating transport, meals and accommodation, crossed with some of the goals of social tourism – "Basic quality factors, such as security, hygiene and health, environmental interests, independence, accessibility to services and rules of consumer protection "and" Healthy food, exercise, and other factors which constitute physical wellbeing, as well as those life domains which constitute spiritual wellbeing and the quality of life "(World Tourism Organisation, 1999, p.2) .

The most diverse opinions were given when evaluating the accommodation, mainly with regards to tangible goods/material resources – e.g., "A first-class hotel." (E12), "Okay, in conclusion, it didn't work." (E3). The experience of the overnight stay away from the usual institution was one way of expressing appreciation of the accommodation; this was distinct from the satisfaction or dissatisfaction with the experience itself, which was governed by the individuals' sleeping habits – e.g., "Good.

(...) We slept well. "(E4), " More or less. (...) I am used to sleeping alone in my small room, and accompanied (...) I could not sleep. "(E21).

The evaluation of the activities programme based on 1) the attractiveness of the places visited and different activities and 2) the interpersonal relationship between senior participants and the organisation staff is aligned with the ideas of the World Tourism Organisation (1999) on the interaction with local communities, the promotion of group support and activity networks, cultural visits, promotion of educational experiences and local traditions, as well as outdoor and entertainment activities.

The seniors expressed general satisfaction with the activities programme not only because of the interest of the locations and the pleasure they gave but also due to the monitoring of each activity and information given by the professionals in charge.

According to Larán and Espinoza (2009), judgments about the consumption experience stand out from among the motivations that lead to consumer loyalty, as these evaluations or judgments strongly influence the creation of attitudes and intentions for action. While repeating and recommending the exchange reveal the senior clients' loyalty and satisfaction, these feelings were dependent on health, the attractiveness of the activities programme and the autonomy to take advantage of it, among other factors.

The influence of participation in the senior exchange programme on the senior clients' satisfaction was confirmed by the determinants: feelings and emotions (recognition, well-being, happiness); expectations (attractiveness of the places, exchange activities, repetition); perceived quality (competence); interpersonal relationship. E.g. "Yes. Because if it wasn't for the *Organisation* I would never have gone to *that place*." (E11); "Because it was a new activity for us, we had never done anything like that." (E13); "More... Because they chose me." (E2); "Going there, I mean, we have never seen anything like that... Never. So, I was satisfied with everything. Everything I saw." (E1).

The participation in the exchange programme has a limited impact on the corporate image and on the clients' perceptions of satisfaction with SEO's services;; more specifically, despite satisfaction with the exchange and its positive impact on the their quality of life, some seniors did not change their perception of the image of the institution and satisfaction held prior to the social tourism programme. Examples are: "No. Because it's still the same *Organisation*." (E21); "Maybe not more. I feel just as satisfied as ever. (...) They do what they can and what I ask them to do, they do it." (E20).

The mobility provided by the *Volto Já* Project has already given the senior participants a new experience that they have undertaken enthusiastically; it has brought prospects for the future, personal fulfilment and the opportunity to expand their network of relationships.

The vast majority of these seniors are more satisfied with the organisation, which considered them the right people to include in this experience. Seniors interpret this as a persistent effort to improve the services provided and they are fully satisfied with the social welfare services provided.

7. CONCLUSION

The interviews with senior participants in the *Volto Já* Project helped evaluate specific aspects of the social tourism activity, and above all, to study whether there is a relationship between social tourism activities and satisfaction with the organisation.

The feelings, emotions, opinions, and attitudes that seniors developed during the tourist activities were the added value that this programme gave them and their lives. These intangible outputs shed light on how the tourist activities influence the seniors' satisfaction with the organisation.

The analysis confirms the relationship between social tourism and senior customers' satisfaction in most cases. Nevertheless, no link was found between participation in social tourism activities and satisfaction with the organisation in a few cases; that is, corporate image is perceived as a determinant of satisfaction that was formed prior to the social tourism activity and not affected by it.

The increased satisfaction with the organisation due to participation in social tourism activities was measured by the attractiveness of the activities programme, expressed willingness to repeat the experience, and feelings such as well-being and happiness, the competence attributed to the organisation, and the relationships generated between participants and employees during the mobilities.

However, the relationship between social tourism activities and customer satisfaction is not straightforward. Satisfaction with the organisation is not affected by only one external activity such as the senior exchange promoted by the *Volto Já* Project, even though the individual recognises the activity is satisfactory. The repeated and frequent practice of social tourism activities may, however, influence that satisfaction.

Loyalty to the organisation can also interfere with the "social tourism activities vs customer satisfaction" relationship. Loyalty is strongly linked to customer satisfaction. When customers are loyal, they are more lenient and do not complain so much about situations in which the service does not meet expectation.

It was also found that dissatisfaction with a component of the senior exchange does not imply general dissatisfaction, and that satisfaction with the social tourism activity does not mean that the seniors are therefore satisfied with the organisation in which they are institutionalised.

The main limitations of this research are as follows: 1) the sociodemographic characterisation of the sample, which required the interviewers to adjust their speech, 2) the short duration of the experience as it would have been interesting to consider more lasting impacts, namely in relation to health issues.

Fruitful avenues for future research include the impact of this type of experience on seniors' quality of life, and more specifically the duration and intensity of this impact. It would also be interesting to study SEO professionals' perceptions of the impact of similar experiences on seniors, as they are in a privileged position to observe attitudes, behaviours, and any changes in the physical and emotional state of institutionalised elderly people.

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