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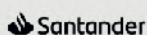




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Mountain hikes and Levada practitioner's motivation and experience-characterization

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1. Abstract

Madeira Island provides excellent conditions for those who visit its Natural Scenarios due to its variety of landscapes, weather, topography and infrastructures. It is then fundamental to think about the experience that is provided.

The aim of this study is to identify the 3 main dimensions related to the practitioner's experience while performing mountain hikes or Levadas: 1. Practitioner's motivations; 2. Practitioner's predisposition; 3. Practitioner's experience.

A "QEFENRAM" survey was applied (Florido, 2010). 293 replies were obtained, after the activities' conclusion (males: 124; female: 169).

The data analysis showed the following results: a) Considering the different levels of motivation, 52,6% of the participants revelled intrinsic motivation while 27,1% showed extrinsic motivation; b) 79.2% is aware of safety measures and has the necessary competence to perform the activity; c) 76.3% reported to be highly focused on their activity and also felt to be part of the scenario itself. Meanwhile 10.9% refer to feel interfering, negatively, with the environment.

We can characterize the practitioner's motivations and experience and based on this information we can discuss about the need to improve some aspects in the touristic scenarios to improve the experience in Levadas and mountain hikes.

Keywords: Nature, Experiences, Hikes, Levadas

2. Introduction

Madeira Island is an excellent destination for activities in the wild due to its climate, topography and different scenarios, leading to touristic development. This diversity urges us to think about the experience that we can provide to those who visit us and to prevent risk situations.

The growing number of tourists performing Mountain hikes and Levadas led to a variety on "visitor profile" (age, gender, physical condition, experience, among others) and terrains to visit (Fernando, Prudente, Lopes, Vicente, 2018).

"Experience" in tourism is described as a multifaceted and complex phenomenon (Selstad, 2007) and the touristic activities provide extraordinary experiences to the practitioners (Peric, 2015) when combined with active or passive sports. The challenge is to create new products that will potentiate the Island characteristics that will lead to inspiring experiences.

From a Tourist point of view, the main question is: "what kind of experience can be obtained from sports tourism activities?". There are several experience designs that we highlight: a) Sport tourism based on activity, place and people, where the interaction of these components is fundamental (Weed,

2005; Weed 2008; Weed & Bull, 2009). b) The “flow-experience”, developed by Csikszentmihalyi (1975) where the living experience will allow the individuals to reach a feeling so intense and pleasant that will take the individuals to focus all their attention on the task performance, forgetting the rest, even losing the notion of time. c) The experience based on 5 perceptual points: *nature-oriented details, scenic values, management influences, presence of other people and depreciative behaviour* (Dorwart, Moore & Leung, 2009).

Like the “experience” in sports leads to adaptations, we can consider the Levadas walks in Laurissilva and Walks out of the Laurissilva, available in Madeira, as an activity that leads to adaptation to the environment. This knowledge allows us to understand how the different factors at stake (*context, situation and to the individual*) will condition the practitioners behaviours (Almada, Fernando, Lopes, Vicente & Vitoria, 2008).

But it is important to consider how the relations between factors are established and how factors can influence the practitioner’s performance and consequently their experience. If we consider the typical walk on trails and paths, it is not an activity that requires many skills, once that “we only have to walk”. However, in a deeper analysis it is important to adequate the walking technique and to adapt according to the terrain obstacles. This consideration is fundamental for the activity performance and for personal safety reasons.

This study aims to compare the Walks outside the Laurissilva Forest (“Veredas”) and the Levada Walks in Laurissilva Forest (“Levadas”) (Dorwart *et al.*, 2009).

4. Methods

A survey, QEFENRAM adapted from CEFEN (Florido, 2010), was applied immediately after its conclusion, to collect data. 28 questions centred our study on 3 main scales: 1. *Practitioner’s motivations*; 2. *Practitioner’s predisposition*; 3. *Practitioner’s experience*.

The first scale 1.) considers factors: a) Extrinsic motivation; b) Intrinsic Motivation; c) Instrumental motivation e d) Autodiscover. The second scale 2.) considers factors: e) Safety and the perception to evaluate the self-competence to perform the activity and f) Predisposition to perform the activity and to get familiarized with the activity. The third scale 3.) considers factors: g) Attention and focus during the activity; h) Progression awareness and control on the technical skills required to perform the activity; i) personal and collective challenge and respect for the environment; j) Awareness about the group and context integration.

The sample was divided in two groups: “Levada” walk inside Laurissilva (G1: n = 170) and “Vereda” walk outside Laurissilva (G2: n = 123). There were no differences regarding age (G1 = 39.85 ± 15.96 years; G2 = 38.46 ± 16.41 years) and there was proportion between men and women (n = 293; Males = 124; Females = 169) (p> 0.05). All data collection occurred during the months of July, August and September 2019 by 7 investigators.

Supported on the SPSS 26.0 software the data analysis was performed: explorative analysis to check sample distribution normality (Kolmogorov-Smirnov) and to identify “outliers”; descriptive statistic (Mean and Standard deviation) was applied to profile the sample; T-Student test for independent samples to check the differences between the groups; Qui-Squared test to verify dependence between the qualitative variables.

5 - Results

In the present study, two types of route were considered: Levada Walks in Laurissilva (G1) and Walks out of Laurissilva (G2). G1 represents 58% of our sample and G2 42%. Only 13.3% of the people were doing the activity through a tourist animation company.



Figure 1 – Sample distribution by place and natural scenarios.

The factors (Table 1) with higher rates from the practitioners are: i. (0.83 ± 0.34), f. (0.82 ± 0.28) and e. (0.80 ± 0.28). The factor with lower values was a. (0.23 ± 0.23) and the factor where we can verify a wider standard deviation is d. (0.46) as we can see in the Table 1.

Table 1 – Mean and Standard deviation (Mean \pm Stdd) for the considered factors that compose the scales: 1. Practitioner's motivations (a, b, c, d.); 2. Practitioner's predisposition (e, f.); 3. Practitioner's experience (g, h, i, j.).

Scale	Factor	Mean Stdd	Max	Min
1. Practitioner's motivations	a. Extrinsic motivation	0.23 ± 0.23	0	1
	b. Intrinsic motivation	0.41 ± 0.43	0	1
	c. Instrumental motivation	0.58 ± 0.30	0	1
	d. Autodiscover	0.69 ± 0.46	0	1
2. Practitioner's predisposition	e. Safety and the perception to evaluate the self-competence to perform the activity	0.80 ± 0.28	0	1
	f. Predisposition to perform the activity and to get familiarized with the activity	0.82 ± 0.28	0	1
3. Practitioner's experience	g. Attention and focus during the activity	0.53 ± 0.42	0	1
	h. Progression awareness and control on the technical skills required to perform the activity	0.72 ± 0.34	0	1
	i. Personal and collective challenge and respect for the environment	0.83 ± 0.34	0	1
	j. Awareness about the group and context integration	0.43 ± 0.30	0	1

From the comparison between G1 (0.41 ± 0.21) and G2 (0.49 ± 0.20) we can verify differences statistically significant on scale 1. Practitioner's motivations ($t_{(291)} = -3.145$; $p=0.002$) with higher average values for G2, according to the Table 2.

When different factors are taken in consideration we can also verify differences statistically significant on factor b. ($t_{(291)} = -5.436$; $p<0.001$), on factor d. ($t_{(291)} = -2.339$; $p=0.020$) and on factor j. ($t_{(291)} = -4.879$; $p<0.001$) with higher average values for G2.

Other differences were found on factor i. ($t_{(291)} = 2.645$; $p=0.009$) in favour of G1 (0.88 ± 0.29).

Table 2 – Group Comparison. Levadas walks in Laurissilva (G1) and Walks out of the Laurissilva (G2). Mean and Standard deviation (Stdd) and *p* value.

	G1		G2		<i>p</i>
	Mean	Stdd	Mean	Stdd	
1. Practitioner's motivations	0.41 ± 0.21		0.49 ± 0.20		0.002
a. Extrinsic motivation	0.22 ± 0.23		0.23 ± 0.24		0.787
b. Intrinsic motivation	0.29 ± 0.39		0.56 ± 0.43		<0.001
c. Instrumental motivation	0.55 ± 0.31		0.61 ± 0.48		0.083
d. Autodiscover	0.64 ± 0.48		0.77 ± 0.42		0.018
2. Practitioner's predisposition	0.81 ± 0.24		0.81 ± 0.23		0.946
e. Safety and the perception to evaluate the self-competence to perform the activity	0.80 ± 0.28		0.80 ± 0.27		1.000
f. Predisposition to perform the activity and to get familiarized with the activity	0.82 ± 0.28		0.81 ± 0.29		0.898
3. Practitioner's experience	0.60 ± 0.24		0.63 ± 0.22		0.354
g. Attention and focus during the activity	0.54 ± 0.42		0.51 ± 0.41		0.509
h. Progression awareness and control on the technical skills required to perform the activity	0.71 ± 0.34		0.73 ± 0.34		0.785
i. Personal and collective challenge and respect for the environment	0.88 ± 0.29		0.76 ± 0.38		0.00
j. Awareness about the group and context integration	0.36 ± 0.31		0.52 ± 0.26		<0.0001

However, we assume that each participant or group, aware of the possessed skills and abilities, will choose appropriate pathways that will enable them to meet appropriate challenges.

6. Conclusions

From the analysis of the collected data it was possible to conclude that:

- There is a low percent of people that is hiring touristic agents or guides to follow them while performing the activity;
- The Intrinsic motivation doesn't present higher values as it could be expected from the results of other studies;
- The values of on i. Personal and collective challenge and respect for the environment; f. Predisposition to perform the activity and to get familiarized with the activity; e Safety and the perception to evaluate the self-competence to perform the activity are compatible with the different explanatory models.
- Comparing G1 to G2 we found differences in factors: b. Intrinsic motivation, d. Autodiscover, j. Awareness about the group and context integration and i. Personal and collective challenge and respect for the environment, with higher mean values for the G2.

Overall, we believe that this research has the potential to investigate deeper the motivation and experience not only in Levadas Walks and Hiking but also in other different touristic products that are so characteristic in Madeira Island as scuba diving, canyoning and coasteering.

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