

Article

Tourists' Perception of Tourist Destinations: The Case Study of Nazaré (Portugal)

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Abstract: Although Destination Image is a relevant investigation topic in the literature, few studies pay attention to Destination Image as reflected in tourists' evaluations and reviews on social networks. Given the importance of social media and the relationship between places and the image of those places, this investigation seeks to analyse visitors' perceptions of a tourist destination. The village of Nazaré (Portugal) was chosen for the analysis. The purpose was to analyse the perceptions of tourists to this village. Methodologically, a netnographic analysis was carried out considering the comments and evaluations made on the TripAdvisor platform, renowned among tourists. The three main attractions were found, and all the comments were counted ($n = 565$) over the 6-year period, from January 2018 to March 2023. It was possible to define the visitor profile. A content analysis was carried out that sought to categorise visitors' perceptions into fourteen categories, namely beach, landscapes, accessibility, recommendations, location, appreciation of the intangible, enjoyment of the experience, emotions, prices, climate, good for a walk, good gastronomy, tourist activity and senses. The contribution of this investigation is to recognise the importance of the village of Nazaré as a tourist destination, centred on the perception of its visitors. Although limited in its scope, this study emphasises the need for tourism promotion agents to focus their initiatives on the creation of immersive experiences and their emotions, as these were two of the categories little mentioned in this study.

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1. Introduction

The tourism sector has experienced significant changes over the years. The development of information and technological communication, mainly due to the use of the Internet, are the main drivers of this metamorphosis [1]. As well as being the most widely used medium for choosing tourist services, the Internet is also key to the dissemination of tourism information [2]. Web 2.0 users share their thoughts on the most diverse platforms or applications [3], demonstrating that the influence of these platforms is increasing significantly every day [4]. The comments shared on the platforms are key to planning and organising trips, as they can provide a preliminary image of the place that they have visited [5]. Destinations need to handle a multitude of issues to establish and maintain a sustainable competitiveness. Smart destinations “which emerged from the notion of smart cities, emphasise the importance of collaboration between stakeholders and meeting travellers' needs before, during and after their trip” [6], p. 554. The possibility of measuring Destination Image through a virtual marketing method materialises in this situation [7].

Theoretically, the concept of a Destination Image encompasses a cognitive dimension and an emotive dimension. However, some authors propose the existence of a third

conative dimension that expresses the behavioural characteristic [8] focussed on the issues that influence image formation, “distinguishing between organic and induced images, arguing that real experience modifies the Destination Image” [7], p. 189. The significance of the modified persuaded image, which emerges from the real involvement of visitors to a particular place, develops more relevance as the images tend to be more real, complex and differentiated following the visit to the destination [9]. However, the image developed must be supported by reality, otherwise the tourist destination will not be able to fulfil the needs of visitors, who will be left with a poor image and will pass on this information to potential visitors.

Used before, during and after a trip, social networks are characterised as a significant resource of data [10]. The content available on social networks is generally perceived as “more reliable than official tourism websites and media advertising” [11], p. 20. However, regardless of its relevance, there is little research that considers the image reflected in social means [12], especially studies that address the importance of visitor perceptions.

This study investigates the concept of Destination Image from the perspective of real tourists in an attempt to fill this research gap. Given the importance of “induced images”, the emphasis is on visitor reviews on TripAdvisor, one of the online travel consumer platforms. This study is based specifically on the example of Nazaré, aimed at clarifying the significance of the Destination Image from the perspective of the visitors themselves. This study also takes into account the limitations of segmenting foreign travellers in the digital age, where the profiles of Internet users [13] sometimes do not match the usual segmentation criteria [14].

The results of this investigation provide a better estimation of the dimensions of the image and its specific meaning when using an online decision instrument. Finally, it provides guidelines for those involved in the tourism sector so that they can better understand the elements that tourists value when evaluating a destination.

2. Theoretical Framework

2.1. Concept of Destination Image

One of the most researched themes in the tourism literature is Destination Image [7,15]. This is a powerful concept, since it can influence visitors’ perceptions of a tourist destination, as well as their loyalty to destinations [16]. The most widely accepted literary definition among researchers defines Destination Image as “the set of beliefs, ideas, impressions that a person has of a destination” [17], p. 408. Destination Image is conceptualised “as a set of beliefs, ideas and impressions that people have of the attributes and/or activities available at a destination” [18], p. 159.

Destination Image is a multidimensional concept that can be interpreted according to three aspects: (a) temporal—pre- or post-visit image [18], (b) attribute—the image can be described as psychological or functional and (c) tourist response to basic stimuli—conative, cognitive and affective [18].

The conative, cognitive and emotional dimensions are commonly referred to as the three main components of Destination Image [19]. The cognitive dimension refers to knowledge of the destination or what individuals may think about it, while the emotional dimension goes beyond the cognitive level, focussing on feelings towards the destination [18]. In turn, the conative dimension expresses the desire to return to a specific destination, resulting from a combination of knowledge and feelings about the destination that motivate the desire to return. In other words, it involves knowing about a destination, having an opinion about it and acting on it [16]. Several researchers have recognised that affective and cognitive images coexist and that the affective image and its components are manufactured on the basis of cognitive evaluation [20]. The conative image results directly from the affective and conative components of tourist behaviour, where the choice of a destination is the product of obtaining “information and images during the cognitive phase and the subsequent evaluation during the affective phase” [16], p. 238.

The global image, an abstract dimension or an individual's global and evaluative representation of a place, is based on a three-dimensional conceptualisation of the Destination Image [21]. The overall image is seen as a blend of emotive and cognitive aspects influenced by other elements, such as sociodemographic characteristics or a previous visit to a place [20].

Researchers distinguish between projected images and perceived images according to supply and demand. The projected image is made up of ideas and impressions about a place for tourists to reflect on, while the perceived image is made up of impressions and ideas about a destination generated by tourists themselves [22].

Primary and secondary images are the two main components of the perceived image. The main image is the result of personal experience of a place, while the secondary image is formed by various sources of data, in addition to personal experience [23]. Information sources can be categorised as induced, autonomous or organic. Induced sources are related to a destination's promotional marketing activities [19]. Books, articles, news, school teaching, documentaries and other autonomous sources, on the other hand, are not linked to a destination [16]. Organic sources are personal in nature, which means they can result from a conversation with family, friends or colleagues about a place, also known as word of mouth, or the increasingly popular online equivalent on social media and Internet platforms, known as electronic word of mouth [16]. In addition, the perceived image changes throughout the journey, namely before, during and after the trip. These images can trigger positive and negative reactions.

Sustainability aspects associated with tourist destinations have progressively gained greater importance, despite a lack of studies that assess tourists' perceptions regarding the image of destinations from the perspective of sustainability [24]. Nevertheless, tourism quickly became a fundamental area of application of the philosophy of sustainability [25], soon after the essential Brundtland report [26]. The definition of a development model that promotes the use of resources to satisfy the needs of present generations with respect to their maintenance for the enjoyment of the following [26] has full relevance in the phenomenon of tourism as it is based, in a significant part, on the use of natural and cultural resources, which are fragile and unique. Coastal areas are clear examples of ecosystems that are highly suitable for tourism but highly fragile and they are often pressured by flows of sun, sea and nautical tourism [27].

The greater involvement of society in aspects of sustainability, visible in the postulates and transversal implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals [28], leads to this concern occupying an important place in the formation of the image of the tourist destination, both on the demand and supply side. It is expected that tourists concerned with aspects of sustainability will consider these aspects more strongly when perceiving the image of destinations and that destinations will seek to incorporate sustainable strategies and practices into their projected image [29,30].

2.2. Destination Image in the Online Context

Consumers are progressively using electronic "word of mouth" to communicate their ideas, attitudes and experiences about services and products since the introduction of Web 2.0. Online social platforms (e.g., TripAdvisor), forums and travel blogs encourage travellers to share their opinions or even their experiences about multiple destinations, helping potential travellers to make the best decision about a destination [19]. The impressions disseminated on online social platforms are likely to induce the perception, decision-making process and word of mouth of potential travellers. The most relevant sources of information for future travellers are "word of mouth", recommendations from friends and family and "e-word of mouth", which is currently an equally indispensable tool due to its influence and power in user-generated content.

In addition, instead of informative and promotional sources of tourist information (induced source), visitors trust the opinions expressed in user-generated content. Tourism services and products are intangible goods and cannot be evaluated before purchase and

consumption, so visitors look for recommendations and word-of-mouth information plays a key role as the most reliable means of information [19]. In this context, destination management organisations have progressively integrated new technologies into their websites and social networks in order to intensify the level of interaction with users, with a view to promoting their destinations through user-generated content, in the hope of positively influencing the image of their destinations.

Nowadays, travellers are expressing their emotions, thoughts and feelings more frequently through various online platforms (e.g., TripAdvisor, Instagram, Facebook, etc.), which produce a large amount of important data about customers [31]. In the tourism and travel sector, user-generated content comprises all the opinions available on the Internet about attractions, accommodation, restaurants and other services, where people share their experiences and rate different services [31]. User-generated content is extensively analysed in the tourism literature. They are therefore referred to as tourism-generated content, which focusses on travel-related content generated and published on social media by tourists [32].

2.3. Analysing Social Networks in Tourism

Overall, the tourism sector is a highly dynamic industry that has been growing thanks to Information and Communication Technology (ICT). The great contribution of ICT to the tourism sector has led to the establishment of the term “smart tourism”. In research, Information and Communication Technologies help to create and share large information sets that can be transformed into value. The three main areas of action include tourism experiences, tourism business models and tourism destinations [33]. The rapid growth of social networks has fuelled an exponential increase in the exchange of information via ICT since 2010. As a result, many studies have been produced on the use of social media in tourism [12]. Social networks are quite ambiguous and can have a significant impact from two different perspectives. On the tourism supply side, they favour the creation of new strategies, and on the tourism demand side, they are capable of linking the sharing of experiences and influencing decision-making by tourists planning new trips [34]. The type of content and the way it is shared allow several categories to be distinguished. Various types can be identified, including discussion forums (Travel Forum), social networks (Facebook, Instagram), content groups (YouTube) and review sites [35].

Comments made available online are important sources for research and activities in the tourism sector. They reflect visitors’ satisfaction and/or dissatisfaction with their experiences [4]. Online reviews, spontaneous and insightful comments “provided by tourists that are freely available and accessible on review platforms” [36], p. 469, represent an authentic combination of facts, opinions, impressions and emotions [37]. Online reviews fulfil various meanings: they express the emotions of the reviewers, portray real experiences, make suggestions and provide essential guidance. Users pass on their content to other users on the platform, so online reviews are a form of electronic word-of-mouth communication [38], which is defined as “a method of spreading information about a product, service, company or brand from person to person via Internet-based technology” [39], p. 460.

Numerous studies have been carried out to investigate the effects of reviews in the hospitality and tourism sector in relation to restaurants, hotels, destinations and other sectors. Researchers have found that reviews can determine the performance of service providers [40] and affect perceived value [41], image [42] and reputation [43]. In addition, they also have an effect on consumer choices, including their intention to visit [44], likelihood to book [45], loyalty [39] and intention to recommend [46].

TripAdvisor, the platform used in this study, was founded in 2000. Today, it has established itself as one of the most reputable and prestigious travel websites in the world, combining around 884 million ratings and reviews [47]. TripAdvisor uses a variety of rating formats, such as reviews, photos and information about attractions and services, to frame a tourist destination [35]. This platform provides relevant information, which serves to determine its various impacts on the tourism sector. The information provided by users

is more reliable, trustworthy, legitimate and transparent [34]. Users share content about a region's tourism products or services on their social networks, making it available to a large number of potentially interested people [37], and these comments can influence their choices [34]. By analysing visitor perceptions, tourism agents can position themselves in the market and improve their strategies [48,49], identifying limitations and strengths [37].

The content that visitors make available on social media provides not only new information and unexplored perspectives, but also elements that are useful for innovation and competition in the tourism sector [50].

3. Characterisation of the Tourist Destination

Located on the Portuguese central coast, Nazaré is a Portuguese fishing village renowned for the women who wear seven skirts, the picturesque boats, the dried fish displayed on the sand and its giant waves [51]. The municipality of Nazaré has a total area of 82.43 km². According to the 2021 census, the municipality had 14,885 inhabitants and is divided into three parishes—Famalicão, Nazaré and Valado dos Frades [52].

The population began to settle in Praia da Nazaré (Figure 1) in the 19th century. Its natural beauty and typical character have always attracted visitors. Throughout most of the 20th century, the population's main activities were fishing, processing fish and selling it. In the 1960s, with tourism, the charm of the village of Nazaré began to be recognised internationally [52]. Over the course of the 20th century, Nazaré saw its traditional outlook change progressively, ceasing to be a fishing village and becoming a village dedicated to tourism, till the moment that the tourism sector is the activity that employs the most workers in the village [51].



Figure 1. Nazaré Beach. Source: [51].

Nazaré gained worldwide prominence due to the Nazaré Canyon (Figure 2), an underwater canyon responsible for generating giant waves at Praia do Norte that attract a vast number of surfers, most notably the American surfer Garrett McNamara. Because of this, the village has become host to the most renowned international surfing championships, welcoming many surfers, as well as thousands of onlookers and tourists who enjoy the sport [51,52].

The growth of the tourist phenomenon can be proven using official statistics, which demonstrate an increase in demand of 85.9% in the number of guests in tourist accommodation in the period 2013–2022, currently totalling close to 135,000 annual guests. The supply seeks to keep up with the increase in demand, registering, in 2022, 1556 beds, the result of an increase of 54.8% compared to 2013 [53,54].



Figure 2. Nazaré Canyon. Source: [51].

4. Methodology

This study of the perceptions of visitors to the tourist destination of Nazaré was based on a qualitative methodology, using the method that fits into the netnographic concept established by [55] as a qualitative study method that seeks to analyse consumer behaviour via the Internet.

This study used online comments made by users of TripAdvisor, an online platform. Currently, this platform is the most renowned in the tourism sector, being used on a large scale globally [43]. With two decades of existence, containing ratings and comments on destinations and tourist attractions, TripAdvisor is the largest online community of tourists [56]. By allowing comments that have already been published to be analysed, TripAdvisor has established itself as a strategic way of collecting and analysing research data [12].

The use of user-generated content as a means of understanding tourist perceptions of tourist services and destinations is constantly increasing, as demonstrated in a study by [57]. This methodological choice is specifically used in exploratory studies and case studies and has been employed since the beginning of the current century [58]. The qualitative methodology as an approach to understanding tourists' perceptions of tourist destinations has been validated by several authors [59,60].

In the first instance, several tourist destinations in Portugal were analysed. Around four were pre-selected, but the village of Nazaré stood out, as it is currently one of Portugal's most internationally renowned fishing villages. Therefore, taking the village of Nazaré as a starting point, the main tourist attractions in the region that were listed on TripAdvisor were identified. There were 28 attractions in the area under study. Due to the large number of comments, the three attractions with the highest number of comments were considered. Nazaré Beach, "Sítio" and São Miguel Fort, all with Travellers' Choice 2022 awards, were the tourist attractions analysed. To achieve a representative sample, a period of 6 years was established for the collection of information (all comments made between 1 January 2018 and 4 March 2023). A total of 565 comments were thus collected.

Following the open-source concept and methodology outlined by [61], the content analysis and coding technique was used to read and extract information from the comments. By reading the comments, it was possible to identify similarities and dissimilarities, which were then referenced. The expressions were then catalogued based on categories and subcategories. Content analysis is structured in three stages [62]. The first stage consists of carrying out a preliminary analysis of the comments collected and understanding whether they fall within the theme being analysed. Secondly, the information collected was categorised following a scheme of classes and subclasses that were created according to the information collected in the comments. Finally, the information collected was processed using specialised content analysis software called NVivo 14.

5. Analysis and Discussion of Results

From the sample of visitors ($n = 565$), it is possible to extract some sociodemographic characteristics. Table 1 shows that the overwhelming majority (51.9%) come from the Portuguese domestic market. Around a third of the sample comes from one of the Portuguese-speaking countries, Brazil, with 31.3%. This corroborates the data from the Portuguese National Statistics Institute, which state that Brazil has become the largest non-European source of tourists. Around 14.5 per cent did not identify where they came from and the rest came mainly from European countries, which are the biggest source markets for tourists to Portugal (UK, 0.4 per cent; France, 0.2 per cent; The Netherlands, 0.2).

Table 1. Gender and place of residence.

Gender	(%)	Place of Residence	(%)
Female	36.8	Austria	0.4
Male	56.1	Brazil	31.3
Unknown	7.1	United States of America	0.4
		France	0.2
		Ireland	0.4
		Luxembourg	0.2
		The Netherlands	0.2
		Portugal	51.9
		United Kingdom	0.4
		Switzerland	0.4
		Unknown	14.5

Source: Self-elaboration based on TripAdvisor reviews.

As far as gender is concerned, in our sample, there is a predominance of males (with a difference of 19.3 per cent for females in relation to the total) (Table 1).

With regard to visitors' evaluations of this tourist destination's attractions, the vast majority of comments were extremely positive (61.2%), followed by very good (31.9%). Negative evaluations (1 and/or 2 stars) are not significant, not totalling 1% (0.9%). Furthermore, only 6% of the comments considered the attractions to be reasonable (Table 2).

Regarding the way in which the respondents in the sample travelled, it can be seen that most of the trips were made as a family (32.4%) or as a couple (27.6%). Only 11.7% admit to having travelled with friends. Around a quarter of the sample did not reveal how they travelled (Table 2).

When analysing the year of travel, it can be said that most tourists visited Nazaré between 2018 and 2020. In fact, since 2011, when surfer Garrett McNamara managed to achieve the unthinkable and surf a 23.77 m wave at "Praia do Norte" in Nazaré, the region has taken advantage of his feat to establish itself internationally as a surfing hotspot, welcoming surfers and tourists practically all year round. Before this feat, and in the not-too-distant past, Nazaré was only known as a fishing village and a place for those visiting Fátima to pass through. It should be noted that the years 2021 and 2022 (the period of the pandemic) show a similar rate of comments (5.1% in 2021 and 5.8% in 2022) (Table 2). This is probably due to a decrease in visitor numbers as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic and the health restrictions imposed at the national level. This decrease in the number of visitors has occurred in other tourist destinations of a cultural [63] and religious character [64,65].

Table 2. Travelling aspects.

Travelling Company	(%)	TripAdvisor Reviews	(%)	Year of Travel	(%)
Alone	2.7	Terrible (1)	0.4	2018	43.4
Business	0.7	Poor (2)	0.5	2019	28.5
Couple	27.6	Average (3)	6.0	2020	16.8
Family	32.4	Very Good (4)	31.9	2021	5.1
Friends	11.7	Excellent (5)	61.2	2022	5.8
Unknown	25.0			2023	0.2

Source: Self-elaboration based on TripAdvisor reviews.

Regarding travellers' perceptions, the content analysis identified 1342 references, which were categorised into category and subcategory codes. Fourteen categories were thus established, in descending order of the number of references: (i) beach; (ii) landscapes; (iii) accessibility; (iv) recommendations; (v) location; (vi) appreciation of the intangible; (vii) enjoyment of the experience; (viii) emotions; (ix) prices; (x) climate; (xi) good for a walk; (xii) good gastronomy; (xiii) tourist activity; and (xiv) senses (Table 3).

Table 3. Content references distributed by category codes.

Dimensions	References (f)	Racio References/Total (%)
Accessibilities	179	13.0
Experience	74	5.5
Touristic activity	10	0.7
Good gastronomy	16	1.2
Good for walking	23	1.7
Climate	29	2.2
Emotions	33	2.5
Location	134	10.0
Landscapes	189	14.1
Nazaré Beach	354	26.2
Price	34	2.5
Recommendations	176	13.1
Senses	1	0.1
Appreciation of the intangible	90	6.7
Total	1342	100

Source: Self-elaboration based on TripAdvisor reviews.

According to the categorisation, it is possible to highlight some of the dimensions that were mentioned the most, namely the beach (26.2%) and landscapes (14.1%). Curiously, given that a large number of studies have focussed on and valued the issue of emotions [66] and the experiences [50,59,67], this study has shown that there are few references to emotional and affective aspects, as well as experiences that are meant to be immersive and memorable. In fact, nowadays, "in this time of abundance and accumulation of goods, people can no longer find happiness, status, identity and meaning in those same goods, and are looking to find them in experiences" ([68], p. 28), as many authors [69–71] have already attested. Experience is a "significant determinant of visitor outcomes, specifically satisfaction, intention to revisit and recommendation" [72], p. 136.

In this study, these dimensions registered residual values: enjoyment of the experience (5.5%); emotions (2.5%); and senses (0.1%). Thus, we believe that these dimensions were secondary to the visitors who registered their comments on the Tripadvisor platform, to the detriment of other more aesthetic dimensions: beach (26.2%) and landscapes (14.1%) (Table 3).

In fact, the comments are limited in terms of experience, very superficial and could be an indication of a possible lack of recommendation or even revisiting. It is therefore important that those responsible for this tourist destination reflect on the findings of this study and reinvent themselves with a view to developing a more immersive experience for visitors.

It is important to detail the references according to each of their categories in order to ensure a better perception of the weight associated with each of the dimensions.

The accessibility category accounts for 13% of all references and is subdivided into six subclasses, namely (i) accessible; (ii) parking; (iii) cleanliness; (iv) traffic problems; (v) services; and (vi) kid friendly. The accessible subcategory accounted for 13.9%, with references such as “excellent access conditions” and “very easy and signposted access”. Totalling 20.2%, the references in this subcategory are negative perceptions that affected the visitor’s experience. The references identified are very similar, with the following examples standing out: “difficult to park”, “some difficulty in parking, even if you have to pay” and “impossible to stop the car”. Cleanliness is a factor that stands out, accounting for 7.8% of the references in this category: “very clean and organized” and “cleanliness throughout the village” are some of the illustrative examples. Traffic problems accounted for 1.7% of the references, with expressions such as “complicated car traffic” and “chaotic traffic” being the most used. The subcategory services stood out, accounting for 57% of the total references in this category. Visitors alluded to the presence of infrastructures such as hotels, “hotel offer”, restaurants, “great restaurants” and shops and handicrafts, “with lots of clothes and handicraft shops”. Finally, the fact that it is a kid-friendly place (7.3%) was emphasised as “suitable for children” and “activities close by to keep the little ones entertained” (Table 4).

Table 4. Accessibility references distributed by category codes.

	References (f)	%
Accessibility		
Accessible	23	12.8
Not accessible	2	1.1
Parking		
Free	1	0.6
Lack of parking	15	8.4
Parking problems	6	3.4
Cleaning	14	7.8
Traffic Problems	3	1.7
Services		
Hotels	4	2.2
Restaurants	64	35.8
Shops and crafts	34	19.0
Kids Friendly	13	7.3
Total	179	100

Source: Self-elaboration based on TripAdvisor reviews.

The category of experience appreciation (which accounts for 5.5% of the total references) brings together all the references made by visitors regarding what they experienced on their trip. The statement “worth it” accounts for 71.6% of the total in this category, with references such as “worth a visit!” and “very worth a visit”. Around 24.3 per cent of visitors mentioned the word “return”, as demonstrated by examples such as “a place to come back to”, “I always come back every year” and “we’ll be back!”. Still in this category, 2.7 per cent of the references were related to memories, with expressions such as “for

memories" and "for posterity". Finally, 1.4% of the references were in the category of not coming back, stating "I won't be coming back any time soon" (Table 5).

For [70], p. 74, experiences are like "individual events that occur in response to some stimulus", and each experience is unique, regardless of who lived it and under what circumstances. This means that someone else who has had the same experience may not have had the same sensations. In the same way, the authors of [73], p. 98, associated the concept of experience with the concept of consumption, considering that companies should organise memorable experiences and events for their consumers to comment on and share, transforming the experience into the product itself, where "an experience occurs when a company intentionally uses services as the stage, and goods as props, to engage individual customers in a way that creates a memorable event". The concept of experiences has been gaining prominence, with visitors themselves seen as buyers of experiences ([69]). However, according to the number of references taken from the TripAdvisor comments in this study, the experience is very much secondary and does not play a relevant role in the region's tourism.

Table 5. Experience appreciation references distributed by category codes.

	References (f)	%
Make memories	2	2.7
Don't come back	1	1.4
It is worth it	53	71.6
Return	18	24.3
Total	74	100

Source: Self-elaboration based on TripAdvisor reviews.

As for the emotions category, which accounts for 2.5 per cent of the total references, adoration stands out (accounting for 33.3 per cent of the category), with examples such as "we love Nazaré" and "we love getting to know the city and its beaches". The pleasant subcategory accounts for 42.4 per cent of the references, "extremely pleasant place" and "pleasant place". Energy totalled 9.1%, with references such as "very positive energy" and "recharging our energy". The subcategory unforgettable, which accounts for 9.1 per cent of the total for this category, features statements such as "an unforgettable place" and "unforgettable place!!!". The references "saudades" (longing) and "sensacional" (sensational) were the lowest (Table 6).

Table 6. Emotions references distributed by category codes.

	References (f)	%
Worship	11	33.3
Pleasant	14	42.4
Energy	3	9.1
Unforgettable	3	9.1
"Saudade"	1	3.0
Sensational	1	3.0
Total	33	100

Source: Self-elaboration based on TripAdvisor reviews.

The localisation category accounts for 10% of the total references and is divided into several groups. Around 45.5 per cent of the references in this category refer to a beautiful place, with expressions such as "beautiful village of Nazaré" and "place of unrivalled beauty". Making up 5.8% of the total in this category were the subcategories interesting place, relaxing place, safe place and quiet place, where references such as "interesting", "place to relax", "tranquility reigns", "safe" and "village is quiet" were visible. Referring

to the village, 11.8 per cent of the total references in this category were identified, with the following expressions, “the best village in Portugal”, “old village”, “highly developed village”, “small village”, “fishing environment” and “the village is picturesque”. Around 11.2% of the references were to the lift, such as “the cable car was spectacular” and “going down in the lift”. Around 12.7 per cent of the category’s total references were to the Nazaré Canyon, examples of which include “Nazaré canyon”. The viewpoint was mentioned 5.2% of the time, with statements such as “very beautiful viewpoint” and “Suberco viewpoint”. Around 6% of the references were to the good location, “fantastic location” and “well situated”. Finally, 1.5 per cent said that the location was unique, “very unique identity” and “unique” (Table 7).

Table 7. Location references distributed by category codes.

	References (f)	%
Elevator	15	11.2
Well located	8	6.0
Nazaré Canyon	17	12.7
Beautiful location	61	45.5
Interesting place	1	0.7
Relaxing place	5	3.7
Safe place	1	0.7
Quiet location	1	0.7
Best villa	1	0.7
Viewpoint	7	5.2
Unique landscape	2	1.5
Ancient village	2	1.5
Evolved village	1	0.7
Small village	5	3.7
Fishing village	1	0.7
Picturesque village	6	4.5
Total	134	100

Source: Self-elaboration based on TripAdvisor reviews.

The landscapes category (14.1% of all references) includes all references to landscapes. Accounting for 54% of the total in this category are references to the view from the lift, the lighthouse and the belvedere, identified by statements such as “fabulous view over the village and the beaches”, “belvedere from where you can see the beautiful landscape”, “fort which is free and has such incredible views” and “Suberco belvedere which has a beautiful view”. The landscape was referred to as beautiful by 20.6 per cent in this category, “enjoying the beautiful view” and “very beautiful landscape”. The horizon and the sunset accounted for 14.3% of all references, with the expressions “a beautiful horizon and sunset” and “fantastic views over Nazaré and the sea”. Lastly, the landscape of the beach was mentioned in 11.1% of the references, “beautiful view of Praia do Norte” and “magnificent view of Nazaré beach” (Table 8).

Table 8. Landscapes references distributed by category codes.

	References (f)	%
Beach	21	11.1
Beautiful	39	20.6
Horizon and sunset	27	14.3
View from the elevator	3	1.6
View of the lighthouse	71	37.6
View from the viewpoint	28	14.8
Total	189	100

Source: Self-elaboration based on TripAdvisor reviews.

The beach category aggregates all the aspects mentioned in relation to the beach, making up 26.2% of the total references analysed. Around 7.1 per cent of the references were to the characteristics of the water, examples being “the sea water is very cold” and “crystal blue waters”. Around one-third of the references in this category alluded to waves (35% referred to big waves, while 0.3 referred to few waves), as can be seen in “the waves were very big”, “giant waves” and “the sea was flat”. Beach qualities were praised as a reference, totalling 35.6% of the totals in this category, “long beach, fine sand”, “clean beach” and “wide beach, with very white sand, very clean and flat”. Surfing appears in 15.3% of the references, “excellent place for surfing”, “surfing” and “surfers”. Sports accounted for 3.1% of the mentions, with mentions such as “football and handball on the public beach” and “amusement centre with bikes and quad bikes for hire, bumper cars and other toys, and even jet ski hire (60 euros for half an hour)”. References to infrastructure and signposting account for 2.3% of the total, “A beach accessible to all. Everything very organised” and “excellent support infrastructure”. Finally, there were 1.5% of references to attractions, “a wide range of attractions”, to the fact that the beach is well known, “a very well known beach”, to the fact that it is nothing special, “there’s nothing special about it” and to the fact that it is busy, “a very busy beach” (Table 9).

Table 9. Beach references distributed by category codes.

	References (f)	%
Cold water	12	3.4
Clean and/or transparent water	13	3.7
Attractions	1	0.3
Well known	1	0.3
Sports	11	3.1
Infrastructures and signage	8	2.3
Nothing special	2	0.6
Busy	1	0.3
Big waves	124	35.0
Few waves	1	0.3
Qualities (sand, size, cleanliness, etc.)	126	35.6
Surfing	54	15.3
Total	354	100

Source: Self-elaboration based on TripAdvisor reviews.

Based on prices, 2.5 per cent of the total references were identified in this category. Prices were described as affordable in 97.1% of the references, “very affordable price” and “symbolic price to enter”. High prices were identified in 2.9% of the references in this category, such as “very high prices” (Table 10).

Table 10. Prices references distributed by category codes.

	References (f)	%
Affordable prices	33	97.1
High prices	1	2.9
Total	34	100

Source: Self-elaboration based on TripAdvisor reviews.

The recommendations category, which accounts for 13.1% of the total references, is subdivided. Around 48.9 per cent of the references make recommendations for future visitors: “you have to visit” and “I recommend visiting with your family or as a couple”. Tips totalled 34.1% of the references and were identified with expressions such as “but you have to be very careful with the sea” and “watch out for parking fines”. Complaints

accounted for 8.5% of the total value of the category, “in August it was very crowded with tourists” and “it’s a pity the area wasn’t better looked after and used”. Finally, the criticisms (with 8.5% of the references) are identified by “I didn’t like the ‘theatre’ that was done just to force tourists to buy something” and “McNamara did more for the Nazaré region than all the (non-existent) campaigns that the tourist agencies should have done” (Table 11).

Table 11. Recommendations references distributed by category codes.

	References (f)	%
Criticism	15	8.5
Tips	60	34.1
Claims	15	8.5
Recommendations	86	48.9
Total	176	100

Source: Self-elaboration based on TripAdvisor reviews.

Regarding the appreciation of the intangible, which represents 6.7% of the total references, there are references to history (23.3%), “piece of history” and “full of history”. The traditional is described in most of the references, with 42.2% of this category, including “place of tradition” and “ladies in traditional costumes” (Table 12).

Table 12. Appreciation of the intangible references distributed by category codes.

	References (f)	%
History	21	23.3
Traditional	38	42.2
Autochthonous	22	24.4
Boat exhibition	2	2.2
Dried fish	7	7.8
Total	90	100

Source: Self-elaboration based on TripAdvisor reviews.

Also mentioned are the locals (24.4%), “welcoming people” and “hospitable people”, the boat exhibition (2.2%), “boat exhibition” and “the artisanal fishing boats”, and finally, dried fish (7.8%), “dried fish area” and “famous dried fish” (Table 12).

6. Conclusions

While the literature on the image of a tourist destination is growing, there are still few studies associated with a systematic and exhaustive analysis of the image of a destination in an online context.

The Web, particularly Web 2.0, is a powerful tool capable of impacting tourists’ perceptions of a tourist destination. Websites can also be characterised as induced, autonomous or organic sources of information [16]. Online reviews represent relevant information, and most sectors seek to benefit from these data. The tourism and hospitality industry is also making use of online data as a way of understanding the needs of current and potential customers. Many researchers have applied different methods to identify the impact of online reviews on future customers [3].

In terms of tourism content generated, organic information sources occupy the best position in the “popularity ranking” among information sources. Information obtained from user-generated content and tourist content generated by previous visitors and residents are marked as both requested and unsolicited sources of information. Organic sources dominate social networking sites, as shown in various studies. The content available on TripAdvisor, which is based on reviews, opinions and experiences of locals, is particularly relevant [7,16].

The aim of this study was to understand tourists' perceptions of tourist destinations, specifically the case of Nazaré. To this end, a netnographic analysis was carried out considering the comments and evaluations made on the TripAdvisor platform. The three main attractions were identified, and all their comments considered ($n = 565$) over a period of 6 years, from 1 January 2018 to 4 March 2023. It was possible to outline the visitor profile. Subsequently, a content analysis was carried out that sought to categorise visitors' perceptions into fourteen categories.

By analysing the content generated by TripAdvisor users, it was possible to identify the three main components of Destination Image: the cognitive, emotional and conative dimensions [7,19]. The dimension most present on TripAdvisor is the cognitive one, which is to be expected since users communicate their thoughts and experiences, which are characteristically cognitive [7,19].

Destinations have their own specificities, which are incomparable components involving functional and psychological characteristics, while tourists' attitudes are a balanced result of predetermined characteristics of the destination and the lived experience [7]. The results obtained prove the theory of the authors of [16], who state that human behaviour is based more on images than on objective reality.

It is important for tourism destination managers to know which are the main cognitive aspects communicated by visitors, as they allow them to identify the key aspects of the tourist experience. Emotional aspects provide valuable information for understanding what can make an experience memorable. As for the conative aspects, they make it possible to directly understand the levels of positive and negative recommendations made by visitors to third parties. Management organisations can then understand which aspects need to be maintained, improved and corrected in order to develop the tourist destination. As analysed in the results, the limited number of references related to the enjoyment of experiences shows that these were secondary in TripAdvisor comments, to the detriment of references to more aesthetic dimensions such as landscapes or the beach. It is therefore important for destination managers to consider a conceptualisation of the destination with a broader image in which the cognitive, emotional and conative dimensions have closer levels of importance.

As this is an exploratory study, it was decided to consider comments on a single platform—TripAdvisor. Therefore, it is a limitation of this study, which can be overcome with a more in-depth study that uses data from other social networks, such as Instagram or Facebook. Since this study was applied to data from a single region, analysing data from several regions and cities could be a guideline for future studies, specifically through comparative studies with other destinations with a strong association with surfing, for example, Peniche, in Portugal or Tarifa, in Spain, in order to look for parallels and differences. Furthermore, the use of different methodologies could be another research suggestion for future studies.

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