



# *book of extended abstracts*

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*The Image and Sustainability of  
Tourism Destinations*

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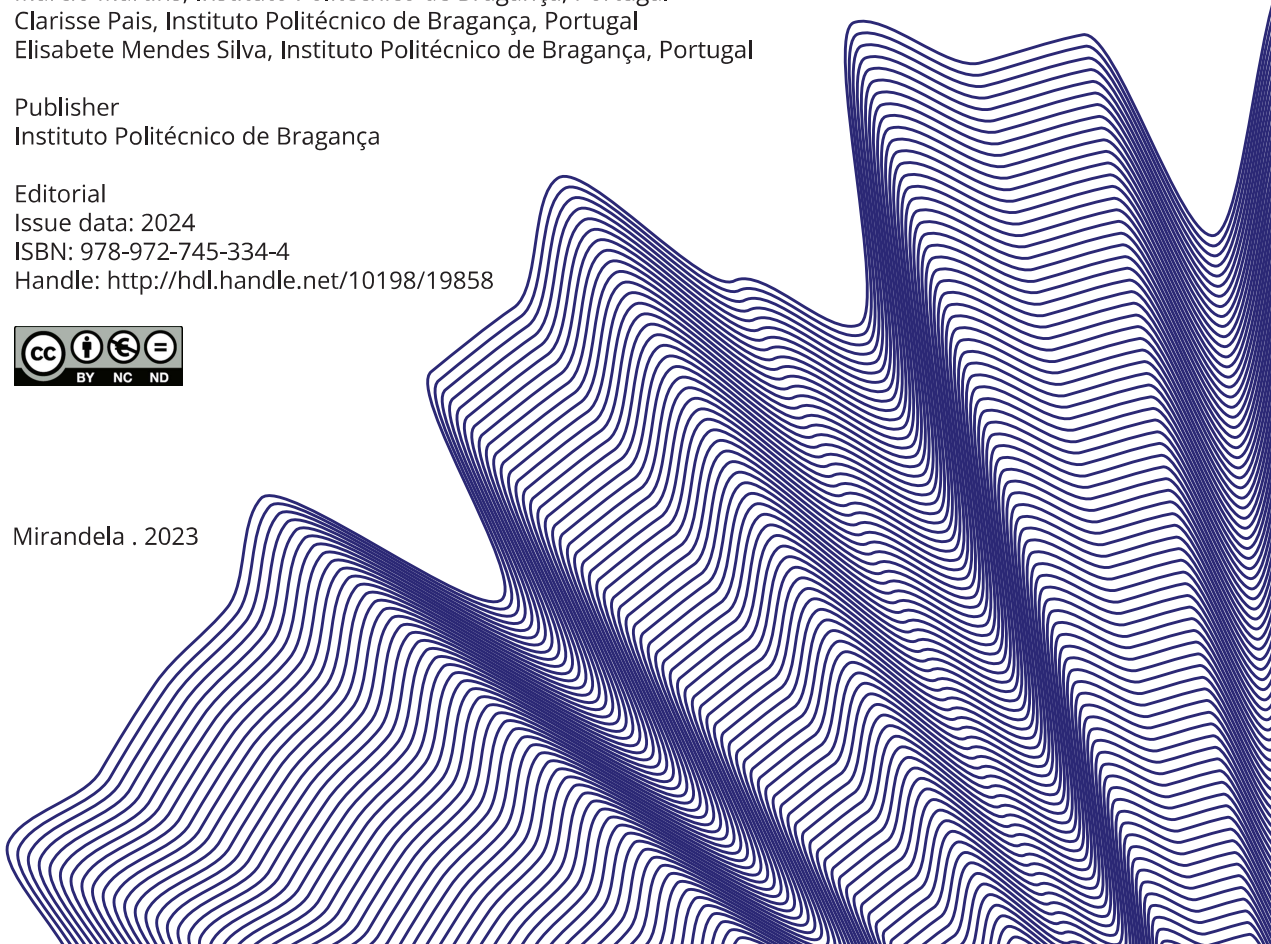
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# THE IMAGE OF PORTUGAL AS A DESTINATION FOR EQUESTRIAN TOURISM

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**Purpose** – The purpose of this work is mainly based on knowing equestrian tourism as a tourism product and as a form of tourism in Portugal, this way, allowing the topic of the image that Portugal holds, as an equestrian tourism destination, to develop. With this in mind, it is intended to answer the following questions: 1) Who is the tourist who practices equestrian tourism in Portugal? 2) What is the image that Portugal holds as an equestrian tourism destination? 3) What are the motivations behind tourists who practice this sport in Portugal?

**Theoretical framework** – Equestrian tourism has experienced significant growth over the past two decades. Sousa (2022) points that the change in the role of the horse in society has promoted the development of horse riding as a leisure activity and as the source of a new type of tourism: equestrian tourism. According to TURIHAB (2012), equestrian tourism is defined by the tourist activity that uses the horse as the main factor of tourist attraction. Equestrian tourism is integrated into adventure tourism held in rural areas and is one of the most popular forms of tourism among younger people (Duarte, 2020). This type of tourism is responsible for great benefits such as the economic growth of regions and combating seasonality and desertification of rural areas. Tomljenović et al. (2018) report, however, that research on both the supply and demand of equestrian tourism is still rare and fragmented, delaying the creation of a coherent corpus of knowledge. According to Ollenburg (2005), there are many demand-side research questions, including: what kind of people acquire the various equestrian tourism products available? What do tourists expect to get and are these expectations fulfilled? What other activities do they engage in? For Magalhães (2015) there are many factors in Portugal

that can promote the development of the country's equestrian tourism that should be analyzed.

**Design/methodology/approach** – The methodological approach was based on a literature review and 4 exploratory interviews with enterprises related to equestrian tourism. Following this, a questionnaire survey was developed for tourists who practice (or have practiced) equestrian tourism in Portugal, in order to create a profile and understand the features that Portugal holds. A total of 116 questionnaire surveys were validated, applied to national and international tourists, which were then analyzed using the IBM SPSS Statistics 26 program.

**Findings** – The results allowed to understand that the equestrian tourist has several reasons that lead him to practice equestrian activities in Portugal, among them the breed of the horses (particularly the Puro-Sangue Lusitano), the quality and reputation of the services, the quality of the facilities, employees and the instructors, the proximity to the horses, the gastronomy, the landscape and the surrounding nature, the feeling of relaxation and the getaway from the routine. The equestrian tourist in Portugal is motivated by the experiences that embrace nature in equestrian activities, enjoys participating in new forms of tourism at the same time, which indicates that equestrian tourism is increasingly becoming an experience that engages with several types of tourism.

**Research, practical & social implications** – This research allowed the identification of several motivational factors and the improvement of the profile of the equestrian tourist, contributing to a better interpretation of Portugal's image as an equestrian tourism destination. The study of the motivations allowed to understand what leads the equestrian tourist to acquire a product or service, where they seek these services, why they seek, among other useful variables that help destinations to adapt their way of promoting themselves. Regarding the image of Portugal as an equestrian tourism destination, it was found that there is still a lot of work to be done in this area, as Portugal has a number of assets, such as the horses, the quality of the services, the facilities, the staff, the coaches, the gastronomy, the landscape and the surrounding nature.

**Originality/value** – The equestrian tourism is a topic that has not been studied extensively worldwide, and also in Portugal. This study contributes to a more recent approach to the motivations and the image of a destination related to equestrian tourism.

**Keywords** – Equestrian tourism, Tourist profile, Destination image, Motivations.

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