

## MICRO-ECONOMIC FACTORS OF TOURIST EXPENDITURE: THE ROLE OF ACCESSIBILITY IN THE CITY OF PORTO

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**Abstract.** In this paper, we assess the determinants of the main tourist expenses in a city (accommodation, meals, culture/leisure and global) considering the socio-demographic profile of the tourist, the length of stay, and satisfaction with visiting the city. Additionally, the main novelty of this study is the evaluation of the destination's accessibility concerning people with special needs as a determinant of tourist expenses. Microdata was collected by a survey addressed to tourists (national and international) who visited the city of Porto. Tobit regressions were applied to explain the main tourist expenses. The results show the perception of the level of accessibility presents a relevant result in the various models. With this paper, we intend to contribute to the literature and support the different stakeholders in defining tourist attraction and loyalty strategies.

**Keywords:** Tourist Expenditure, Accessibility, Microdata, Tobit.

**JEL Classification:** D01, D91, M30, Z30, Z32.

### Introduction

The determinant of tourist expenditures refers to the factors that influence the tourist's expenditures. These factors can vary depending on the tourist profile, the destination's characteristics and the purpose of the trip. Factors like income, travel purpose, length of stay, accommodation, transportation, personal preferences, among others, can influence tourist expenditures. Understanding these determinants can help tourism industry professionals developing effective marketing strategies and pricing policies to attract and retain tourists. In this study we analyse the microeconomic determinants of tourist expenditure in the city of Porto, considering different types of expenditure, namely accommodation, meals, culture/leisure and total expenditure.

Porto is the second largest city in Portugal and one of the most popular European tourist destinations. The city is distinguished, among other reasons, by its Historic Centre, which was considered a World Heritage Site by UNESCO in 1996, and which attracts countless tourists

every year. As a result of its importance to Portuguese tourism, it has won several awards, as occurred recently with the World's Best City Destination at the World Travel Awards 2022, the tourism Oscars. Before that, the city also has won several awards, such as World's Leading City Break Destination, in 2020, and the Best City Destination in Europe award. This year the city has already started to stand out as winning the "City of the Year" award at the Food and Travel Reader Awards 2022 gala, which took place in London.

Overall, tourism in the city of Porto is a growing industry, and the city attracts visitors from around the world who come to experience its rich culture, history, and gastronomy.

In this article, we intend to contribute to the literature with the study of the determinants of tourist expenditures in the city of Porto considering the tourist's sociodemographic characteristics, the length of stay, satisfaction with the city and the perception of the destination's accessibility concerning people with special needs.

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The literature that considers the determinants of tourist expenditures, as we will present in the next section, is mainly focused on trip specificities, and tourist motivations and characteristics, including satisfaction with the destination.

Therefore, the main research objective and novelty of this study is the evaluation of the impact of destination's accessibility concerning people with special needs on tourist expenses, considering accommodation, meals, culture/leisure and total expenses.

## 1. Theoretical background

An important role in national economies is attributed to tourist activities, and therefore the economic impact of tourism and its determinants is a relevant topic both for academics and professionals (Vieira et al., 2021). Various factors that influence the level of expenditure have been widely addressed in the literature. Among these, the sociodemographic characteristics are the departure point for the analysis, namely age, educational level, gender, income and economic constraints, occupation/profession, household numbering, marital status and life cycle stages, nationality, place of residence, language, race-ethnic group and family origins are among the aspects to be considered (Alegre et al., 2011; Alegre & Juaneda, 2006; Azam, 2022; Baños-Pino et al., 2022; Boboli & Dashi, 2021; Brida & Scuderi, 2013; Burnett & Baker, 2001; Cárdenas-García et al., 2016; Disegna & Osti, 2016; Hung et al., 2012; Marrocu et al., 2015; Mudarra-Fernández et al., 2019; Park et al., 2020; Stefko et al., 2020; Tafel & Szolnoki, 2020; Wang & Davidson, 2010; Zakaria et al., 2021). The role of age is not conclusive among authors (Brida & Scudery, 2013), and gender had not a statistically significant effect on most studies considered by Brida & Scudery (2013). On the other hand, there seems to be a positive relationship between the level of education of the tourist and expenditure on the destination (Park et al., 2020; Pulido-Fernández et al., 2020).

Tourist motivations are also indicated as having an impact on expenditure (Alegre et al., 2011; Apostolakis & Jaffry, 2009; Bernini et al., 2017; Dunne et al., 2007; Park et al., 2020). According to Alegre et al. (2011), tourist motivations provide relevant information for targeting those market segments that offer the highest potential earning capacity. For instance, as it is referred by Park et al. (2020), leisure travellers have the highest shopping expenditure; attending a conference at the destination appears to induce relatively higher general expenditure; but when tourists are visiting friends and relatives tend to spend less compared to general leisure travellers, while business travellers tend to spend almost twice as much. Therefore, the tourist's motivation could also be considered.

On the other hand, the characteristics of the trip, such as the length of stay, type of accommodation, and the number of persons in the group are known for their impact on the expenditure (Aguiló et al., 2017; Apostolakis

& Jaffry, 2009; Brida & Scuderi, 2013; Gómez-Déniz & Pérez-Rodríguez, 2019; Mudarra-Fernández et al., 2019; Park et al., 2020; Pulido-Fernández et al., 2019). According to Park et al. (2020), special attention should be drawn to the variable of the length of stay, as a longer duration of stay generates a greater amount of the total budget spent.

According to D'Urso et al. (2020), tourists' satisfaction is a powerful and critical instrument to drive destination competitiveness and "the level of satisfaction would thus be a factor that would boost the tourism competitiveness of the destination and the economic impact that the sector has on it" (Perles-Ribes et al., 2021, p. 2653). Consequently, satisfaction with the destination, namely with its landscape and price, quality and hospitability, facilities and information, destination preservation, and specific events, are determinants of the tourist's expenditure that should be addressed (Bernini & Galli, 2022; Borges et al., 2016; Cárdenas-García et al., 2016; D'Urso et al., 2020; Disegna & Osti, 2016; Jurdana & Frleta, 2017; Perles-Ribes et al., 2021).

Other determinant factors are starting to be included in this relationship with tourist expenditure, namely the tourist's perception of a socially responsible destination (Borges et al., 2018; Borges et al., 2019; Johnson et al., 2018; Vila et al., 2015). Within this context, accessibility is gaining special importance for the competitiveness of tourist destinations. Accessible Tourism (AT) is understood as an offer formatted to grant full access to destinations and tourist products to all, regardless of the potential special necessities of each one (Münch & Ulrich, 2011). It implies that requirements including mobility, vision, hearing, and cognitive dimensions are met with "equity and dignity through the delivery of universally designed products and environments" (Souca, 2010, p. 1154). AT is directed to anyone who has temporary or permanent difficulties of access or mobility (due to disabilities, advanced age, health status, or any other particular situation (e.g. pregnancy, obesity, families with young children) (Darcy & Dickson, 2009; Linde et al., 2019). The inclusion of seniors in this group is placing the concept of accessibility in the spectrum of the importance of "silver economy" (Eusébio et al., 2016). As it is indicated by Smith (2014, p. 1) "two in five seniors have a physical and health condition" or a "disability, handicap, or chronic disease that prevents them from fully participating in many common daily activities". According to Natalia et al. (2019, p. 170) "accessible tourism has become an evolving field in which some governments have focused policies and marketing efforts".

Consequently, it is noted that promoting accessibility and inclusion leads to greater competitiveness, differentiation, and sustainability (Devile & Kastenholz, 2018; Dwyer & Kim, 2003; Michopoulou et al., 2015; Natalia et al., 2019; Rucci, 2018; Santana et al., 2018; Vila et al., 2015). By reinforcing the image of the destination as an accessible tourist destination, the stakeholders can increase the destination's attractiveness, and its potential

revenue (Domínguez et al., 2013; Luiza, 2010; Pavkovic et al., 2017).

## 2. Methodology and data analysis

We use a quantitative methodology, based on a questionnaire survey, to address research objectives. The data was collected by direct interviews to a sample of tourists aged over 18 years, and the questionnaire was applied in the main tourist points of the city of Porto on 26th October 2022.

We estimated four econometric models, considering as dependent variable in each model, each type of expenditure: accommodation, meals, culture/leisure and total expenditure.

For each model, the main independent variable is the perception of accessibility concerning people with special needs, a categorical variable with four levels: 'Inadequate', 'Neither too much nor too little suitable', 'Adequate' and 'Totally adequate'. We also included variables considered in previous studies, namely the sociodemographic profile of the tourist (gender, age, marital status, education), length of stay, and a dummy variable for satisfaction with the city.

We applied a Tobit regression model. Tobit model is a censored regression model and was chosen because the dependent variable (expenditure) is censored, meaning we only observed its values above zero, which is more appropriate than other types of models (Wooldridge, 2013). We used STATA (version 17) software in the analysis.

## 3. Results

We collected a sample of 880 tourists visiting the city of Porto. Considering data extracted from 'Survey on Guests Stays on Hotel Establishments and Other Accommodations' published by Statistics Portugal (INE), guests in tourist accommodation establishments ascended by 6,053,768 in the North Region of Portugal, in 2022 (INE, 2023). Considering the universe size, with a confidence interval of 99% and 5% margin error, our sample is representative of the universe of tourists in Portugal.

From our sample, 55.9% of the respondents were female, and 44.1% were male, with an average age of 41.3 years (minimum 18 years and maximum 85 years). More than half of the respondents were married (52.3%) and 72.3% had at least a degree. Most of them, 93.5%, were tourists of foreign nationality and stayed, on average, 5.6 nights in the city.

In terms of satisfaction with the city, 99.1% were satisfied. As for the evaluation of the city of Porto concerning accessibility for people with special needs, 35.1% indicated that the city was 'totally adequate' or 'adequate', 22.0% considered it very inadequate or inadequate and 42.8% neither too much nor too little inappropriate (applied to a 5-point Likert scale of adequacy.)

Regarding average expenses, per day, in the city, it was found that tourists spend 146.96 EUR on

accommodation, 65.56 EUR on meals, 44.50 EUR on culture and leisure and the total expenditure reaches 383.23 EUR total (accommodation, meals, travel, shopping/gifts, culture and leisure and all-inclusive).

Table 1. Sample description

Variables	Percentage/Mean
Gender	
Female	55.9%
Male	44.1%
Age	41.3
Marital status	
Single	39.0%
Married	52.3%
Divorced	5.6%
Widow	3.1%
Education (complete)	
No degree	27.7%
Bachelor's or other degrees	72.3%
Nationality	
Foreign nationality	93.5%
Portuguese nationality	6.5%
Length of stay (nr. day)	5.6
Satisfaction with the city	
Yes	99.1%
No	0.9%
Accessibility	
In terms of accessibility, how do you evaluate this destiny for people with special needs?	
Totally inadequate	5.7%
Inadequate	16.4%
Neither too much nor too little suitable	42.8%
Adequate	26.1%
Totally adequate	9.0%
Expenditures per day	
Accommodation	146.96
Meals	65.56
Culture and leisure	44.50
Total	383.23

The results for the Tobit model considering accommodation expenses (see Table 2) show that sociodemographic characteristics (gender, age, marital status, education, and nationality) influence tourism expenditure. In concrete terms, it is observed that females are more likely to spend more than men during the trip. The variable age positively influences expenditure. Married tourists spend 72.27 EUR more than single tourists, in turn, divorced spend less 42.94. The

educational level (having at least a bachelor) also positively influences accommodation expenses. It was also observed that the more days tourists stay in the city, the more they spend on accommodation. Regarding the perception of accessibility for people with special needs, it appears that tourists who considered it more suitable are also more likely to spend more on accommodation expenses.

Regarding expenses with meals, it was verified that only the variables 'married' and the variables related to the levels of accessibility 'totally adequate' and 'adequate' influenced expenses, with a statistically significant effect. Married tourists spend more on meals, and tourists who assessed the city of Porto as 'totally adequate' in terms of accessibility, are more likely to spend more on meals, compared to those who found it inadequate, by 26.54 EUR (see Table 1).

Table 2. The determinants of the tourist expenditures in terms of accommodation and meals – Tobit model

Variables	Accommodation	Meals
	Coefficient	Coefficient
Gender		
Female	-23.86*	3.62
Age	71.04***	.43
Marital status		
Married	72.27***	15.60*
Divorced	-42.94***	-10.63
Widow	-52.52	-28.50
Education (complete)		
Bachelor's or other degrees	28.22***	-6.22
Length of stay (nr. day)	14.23***	-.22
Satisfaction with the city		
Yes	13.30	39.14
Accessibility		
Inadequate	-66.72**	20.90
Neither too much nor too little suitable	-68.33**	12.21
Adequate	88.17***	18.40***
Totally adequate	69.01*	26.54***
Constant	58.51***	-9.51

Notes: Significant at \* $p < 0.10$  level; \*\* $p < 0.05$  level; \*\*\* $p < 0.01$

Considering the Tobit model applied to leisure and culture expenditure (see Table 3), the level of education was statistically significant, with tourists with a higher educational level spending 2.47 EUR more than those without an academic degree. It was also observed that tourists who spend more days in the city are also more likely to spend more per day on culture and leisure.

Table 3. The determinants of the tourist expenditures in terms of culture/leisure and total – Tobit model

Variables	Culture/leisure	Total
	Coefficient	Coefficient
Gender		
Female	-6.6	-93.75**
Age	.05	1.65
Marital status		
Married	-3.64	87.57
Divorced	-2.90	54.92
Widow	-20.16	3.09
Education (complete)		
Bachelor's or other degrees	2.47***	114.42**
Length of stay (nr. day)	3.21**	16.72***
Satisfaction with the city		
Yes	5.99	167.85
Accessibility		
Inadequate	3.87	77.60
Neither too much nor too little suitable	18.88	43.34
Adequate	14.18	57.11**
Totally adequate	7.55	55.49**
Constant	32.15	-5.80

Notes: Significant at \* $p < 0.10$  level; \*\* $p < 0.05$  level; \*\*\* $p < 0.01$

Concerning total tourist expenditure (see Table 2), we found that gender and education were statistically significant. Higher levels of education are associated with higher total expenditures, which following other authors (Jurdana & Frleta, 2017; Pulido-Fernández et al., 2019). Specifically, females spend less than males. The role of gender is not conclusive among authors (Brida & Scudery, 2013), and Pulido-Fernández et al. (2020) found that women spend more than men. On the other hand, people with a higher level of education are more likely to spend more (Park et al., 2020; Pulido-Fernández et al., 2020). As for the length of stay, people with more time in the city spend more per day, in line with previous literature (Jurdana & Frleta, 2017; Park et al., 2020). In terms of perceived accessibility, tourists with a better perception of the city's suitability for people with special needs spend more.

## Conclusions

The city's tourism plays a crucial role in national and local economies. Although the determinants of tourist expenditure are a widely studied topic, the consensus regarding their potential impacts is far from being consensual. The present study contributes to the literature because it includes the impact of the tourist's perception of the accessibility of a destination for people with



special needs on the various tourist expenses, which has never been studied.

The results of this paper show that a positive evaluation of the destination in terms of accessibility has a positive impact on tourism expenses (accommodation, meals, culture and leisure and overall expenses), which proves to be an extremely important result for the different stakeholders in the sector.

Given that, the communication strategy could be focused on the accessibility of the destination, to reach other tourist segments, aligned with the current investment of several cities to become more accessible and smarter.

We also found that sociodemographic characteristics and length of stay have a positive influence on daily expenses with tourism in line with existing literature on the topic (Alegre et al., 2011; Alegre & Juaneda, 2006; Azam, 2022; Baños-Pino et al., 2022; Boboli & Dashi, 2021; Brida & Scuderi, 2013; Burnett & Baker, 2001; Cárdenas-García et al., 2016; Disegna & Osti, 2016; Hung et al., 2012; Marrocu et al., 2015; Mudarra-Fernández et al., 2019; Park et al., 2020; Stefko et al., 2020; Tafel & Szolnoki, 2020; Wang & Davidson, 2010; Zakaria et al., 2021).

Some limitations should be highlighted and may be studied in future studies. The main motivations for visiting the city, the type of accommodation chosen by tourists, and visiting other nearby destinations, among other variables, can be added to the model and be the subject of future analysis.

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## Contribution

All authors are equally involved in carrying out this study. Concretely, all the authors carried out the conception, the design of the study, and the collection of responses to the questionnaires. The author Elvira Vieira carried out the literature review, Ana Pinto Borges applied all the statistical and econometric methods appropriate to the applied model and Ana Maria Reis carried out the conclusions and wrote the entire work.

## Disclosure statement

No competing financial, professional, or personal interests from other parties.

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