

Creating a City Image Based on Foreign Visitors' Views Retrieved From Historical Documents: The Case of Porto

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Abstract: Porto has been a city with a mercantile vocation since at least the 12th century. In fact, in 1353, during the reign of Afonso IV, the Porto merchant Afonso Martins Alho assumed a pioneering role when negotiating the first trade treaty with King Edward III of England. As the commercial cosmopolitanism of this city has been known since ancient times, it will be important to know how foreigners described the landscape of the city once known as *Portucale* during the Early Modern Age (15th to 18th centuries). In this context, this study will seek to reveal the evolution of the imagery of the city of Porto built by foreigners. Therefore, we will characterize the profile of the first travellers who settled in the village and who poured their experiences into travel book accounts. These precocious travellers were diplomats, nobles, soldiers, scientists, artists, among others. The narratives, in this historical period, still had a biographical bent, where personal considerations and opinions about the places they visited were prominent. These types of reports are useful, if seen as a complementary source to others, as they present testimonies that are far from the reality of Porto, as well as comparative views with the reality of the country from which these travellers come. Therefore, the methodology used will focus on a space delimited by the city of Porto and its term and on a time interval that will begin in the mid-fifteenth century and end in the beginning of the eighteenth century. Through the analysis and documentary interpretation of secondary and primary sources, we will seek to know the specific ways in which outsiders represented the “Porto destination”. With regard to the implications of our investigation, we believe that this will prove useful for the marketing managers of the Porto destination, since, by getting to know the way in which the imagery of the city was constructed by outsiders, during the Early Modern Age, they will be able to promote the Porto destination in a more authentic and differentiated way than the direct competition.

Keywords: travel books, tourism, early modern age, Porto, travel guides

1. Introduction

The identity of the city of Porto is indelibly marked by several elements: river, commerce, industry, wine, granite, the Atlantic Ocean and the opaque blanket of morning fog that can be seen along the Douro River (Cabral, 2011).

From early on, this city prospered with the treatment that was carried out in its port, located on the right bank of the Douro River and close to the Atlantic Ocean. One of the commodities that quickly gained preponderance in the trade of the largest port in the North of Portugal, in addition to salt, was wine, which, at least since 1371, was already exported by Porto merchants (Cardoso & Silva, 2007). In fact, even before that, in 1353, Afonso Martins Alho, as a representative of Portuguese merchants, established with ‘Eduardo III of England the oldest international trade treaty in our country’ (Sousa, 2000, p. 237). In fact, wine – and the taxes that were applied to its trade – influenced the urbanism, architecture and society of the city of Porto (Cabral, 2011).

However, commerce only flourished in the city of Porto from the twelfth century onwards. *Portucale*, the pier of the village that gave its name to the country, developed, and its people expanded along the Vila River (watercourse that runs underground through *Rua de S. João* and *Rua de Mouzinho da Silveira*) until they arrived to Alto da Pena Ventosa where, in the 12th century, the Cathedral and the episcopal facilities were erected, in what constituted ‘a walled and fortified village in conditions of solidity, nobility and art such as had never been seen in the place’ (Machado, 1968, p. 139).

As far as tourism is concerned, it was in the late 17th and early 18th centuries that The Grand Tour became popular among the English aristocracy. This phenomenon took the form of a journey – lasting from six months to two years, which was undertaken by young British nobles to Continental Europe and which normally gave

priority to destinations such as Paris and Rome, the latter city being connoted with the heritage of antiquity. (Braga, 2007).

In the 18th century, travel guides were published, offering practical information about the places to visit. According to Matos and Santos (2004), travel guides had a utilitarian and pedagogical character in providing their readers with information about the trips to be carried out and the places to visit. In the 18th century, people travelled with the aim of “knowing other lands and other people, different laws and different customs” (Chaves, 1987).

Already in the 16th century, diplomacy – and the itinerancies and cultural diffusion that it promotes – constitute relevant sources for historians (Buescu, 2019). As Saldanha (2021), mentions, in the 18th century, these works constitute travel reports where knowledge and experiences are recorded and where new territories are exhibited.

However, the oldest accommodation guide dates back to 1225 and is called Pilgrims Guide. This manual included information about hospices, inns and hostels located in Central Europe. The development of commerce and cities during the Late Middle Ages contributed to greater dynamics in land, sea and river transport. This evolution created favorable conditions for the emergence, in 1553, of the *Guide to the Ways of France*. In turn, from 1616 onwards, there was an unequivocal increase in ‘publications with travel reports and informative guides that were successively published in Germany, describing this country, France and Italy’ (Domingues, 2013, p. 160).

The present investigation intends to constitute itself as a study of travel narratives that portrayed, during the 15th, 16th, 17th and early 18th centuries - until the eve of the signing of the Treaty of Methuen (1703) - the city of Porto, under outsiders' point of view. The research problem arises from the lack of studies on the History of Tourism in Porto detected by us. So far, there is no study that deals exclusively with travel reports that portrayed the city of Porto at the dawn of the Modern Age. It is this gap that we intend to contribute to fill with this work.

2. The current concept of tourist image

The tourist image of a destination is crucial as it allows to distinguish it from the others and influence the process of choosing, repeating the visit or recommending it. A tourist destination is something dynamic, constantly changing, which is embodied in the set of services and infrastructures to support tourism activity and to respond to visitor requests (Borges, 2017).

Tourism and culture play a key role in the image creation process, in order to respond to consumer needs (Richards & Wilson, 2005). The image of cities and regions is based on physical elements, but, in the same way, it is transformed from the experiences built around these elements, which normally encompass the “living culture” and the “atmosphere of the places” (Wilson, 2002, cited in Gonçalves, 2008, p. 12).

Kastenholz (2002) argues that the current use of the term “image” is sometimes used in the marketing area as a way for the consumer to mentally perceive products, brands, companies and/or their representatives. In his view, the concept of image is increasingly relevant, since the competitiveness of companies and products is also increasing.

Still on this topic, Baker (2007) argues that there are two models to follow: the bet on the physical and material aspects of a place, or the bet on the place as an experience, space and as a space that promotes experiences. To this end, it is necessary to structure and build the image of the place according to three parameters:

- 1. *Organic image*, which is formed by the knowledge we have of the place through the influence of the media, books, movies, family and friends and studies. This image is all the more powerful, the longer and more interesting its history, the distinctive cultural traits, the stunning landscapes, and it can also be a political and economic center of interest.
- 2. *Marketing-induced image*, using media such as advertising, public relations, websites, brochures and fairs; that is, it is built through promotional messages, allied to the organic image or the basic knowledge of the place.
- 3. *Experience phase (experiential phase)*, where the image is improved after the consumer's first contact with the place. All places that attract for leisure or business, go through this phase.

Thus, the image is the perception that others have of the place, while the identity is the reality, which is why it is not only important to change the image and not change the reality. On the other hand, it must be remembered that a strong image promotes trust, if it corresponds to the veracity of the place, because, when promoting it to the market, tourists, entrepreneurs, residents, they have to be confronted with a reality, but positive and authentic.

Promoting a territory requires the identification of its distinctive features and the structuring of an attractive and competitive value proposition, building a strong brand and promoting a good relationship between all stakeholders – residents, visitors, institutions, entrepreneurs, among others.

The tourist offer in Porto has experienced a significant improvement over the last few years. The need for innovation, creativity and the growing influence of culture in the area of tourism have converged to the emergence of a new paradigm in terms of the offer of destinations, with implications for their image and, consequently, for their brand: creativity, through the development of new products related to various special interest tourism. It is therefore crucial that the representation harmoniously corresponds to the real, so as not to disappoint the tourist's expectations. Persuading tourists to visit (or revisit) a particular place over another is directly related to visibility, knowledge and empathy with the destination and its values.

3. Travel books and guides

Travel guides are presented as an introduction to the territory, being good or bad, constitute a mediation with space (Roncayolo, 2011). In them, reality and its representation are expressed, travel guides are a way of thinking and organizing the real, the territory and the city. From this point of view, in an analysis of a long-term collection of guides, that is, in a temporal space with analytical relevance, it is possible to highlight the strata of the mutations that took place in the city and in the ways of representing it.

The collection of travel guides, over time, allows us to observe how different points of view about the city and its elements influence the way itineraries are chosen (Roncayolo, 2011). Thus, the true legitimacy of the guide is due to the fact that it offers a reading of the historic part of the city, which leads us to affirm that a travel guide presents a mediator of representations acquired through the testimonies of different travelers.

The printed guides highlight two levels of construction, these being the textual and the spatial, that is, a particular way of reading places and peoples. In a way, the guides build landscapes, places and stereotypes of people (Cohen, 2005, p. 85).

The reports of travelers written during the 15th and 16th centuries make room for us to think about the reported peculiarities of distant and not-so-distant peoples, which were the stuff of the feathers of those who ventured on sea and land to see them up close. It is also said of itself in the other, allowing to see, equally, the approximations and distances between cultures (Albuquerque, 1983).

In this way, the reports are part of a plot that help to highlight the changes and permanence of customs, such as the singularities of human practices, within the kingdoms, peoples or cultures, in this dynamic “of those who from here, speak of those from there” (Veyne, 2014, p. 42-45).

The specificity of these narratives written throughout the Modern Age consists in their writing in vernacular languages to the detriment of Latin, giving way to technical terms and personal interest in everyday life (Mollat, 1990, p. 9-12).

Although motivated by different reasons in the venture and in the objective of their travels, the Portuguese kingdom, in the 15th century, constituted a territory of interest to foreigners due to the attractive overseas trade of the caravels that used to travel with the intention of importing products from Africa and the East.

Portugal was then considered an attractive country for foreign travelers, due to its culture, customs and economic activity, not only during the 15th century, but also throughout the Modern Age. Hence, travel books, throughout this period under study, were considered as subsidiary documents of the social history of the Portuguese people, to be used as such, they had to be subjected to analysis and criticism. Authors were

evaluated according to the circumstances of their stays and the purposes for which they wrote the account of their travels.

The facts narrated had to be verified, within the scope of history. The historical conditions of acceptance of such works and their scope in space and time also had to be evaluated, in order to make travel books viable.

The genre of narratives under analysis – travel literature – is considered by many authors as a fundamental step in the act of traveling, making it possible, in this way, to create a mark of distinction and an individual path through writing (Vicente, 2003).

It is through writing that the traveler proves his presence in a given space and, through it, his readers create images from the written reproductions, which is a “passing vision” (Duncan & Derek, 1999).

The expression “travel literature” raises some controversy regarding its use as a source of research, since it refers to testimonies left by non-natives: “Men who live in a different social and mental climate, men with other interests and having a new scale of values to judge things and events, given that their origin, their social environment and their way of life are different” (Serrão, 1970, p. 283).

4. Methods

Regarding the chronology of the present study (1447-1702), it begins at a time when Portugal is in a period of maritime expansion along the African coast (Carpentier & Lebrun, 2002), under the aegis of Infante D. Henrique (Cape Verde was recognized in 1445 and the illustrious Porto native died in 1460) and ends on the eve of the Methuen treaty (1703). The signing of this treaty took place in a context in which ‘Portugal, as a result of the conflictual situation between England, France and Spain, gained important shares of the British wine market that it was also important to maintain in peacetime’ (Cardoso, 2003).

The objective of our investigation is to know how the image of Porto was built by foreigners who visited the city at the dawn of the modern era. In this case, we understand image as a way of “simplifying, symbolizing and qualifying the value and meaning that people attribute to objects, people and places” (Braga, 2007, p. 71). In this context, we researched primary sources, that is, original texts, written by the authors themselves, devoid of other people's interpretations (de Haro et al., 2016). Instead of undertaking a search of printed sources in libraries, we favour the analysis of sources through virtual catalogs associated with national and international public library websites. We also used bibliographies by renowned authors that dealt with foreign travelers who visited the Iberian Peninsula from Antiquity to the 20th century (works by Arturo Farinelli (1920), Foulché-Delbosc (1896) and Garcia Mercadal (1999)).

Travel narratives can be written by tourists, scientists, artists, etc. As José Amado M Mendes (1993, p. 135): refers:

Its value depends a lot on the competence of the respective author, but also on the optics through which he observes reality. In many cases, they are foreigners who, if they do not always show a thorough knowledge of the Portuguese reality, their distance – as they are foreigners – and the tendency to compare Portugal with their own countries make many of their testimonies very interesting. This is one of the sources to be used as a complement to others.

This aspect will justify the internal criticism of sources (which can be of interpretation, competence, veracity, accuracy, verification of testimonies). External criticism or authenticity criticism (of provenance and reconstitution) seems to us to be less relevant Mendes (1993).

With regard to the spatio-temporal delimitation of the unit of analysis, the present study is limited to the territory included within the Fernandina wall since the 14th century, the new term (Campanhã, Paranhos, Cedofeita, Massarelos and Lordelo) and the old (Gondomar, Bouças, Maia, Aguiar de Sousa, Penafiel de Sousa, Gaia, Vila Nova de Par de Gaia, Azurara and Pindelo) in the city of Porto (Silva, 2000).

Taking into account Veal (1997), historical science helps us to know the origins of practices, attitudes and institutions that are combined with tourist activity, as well as allowing us to understand the evolution of this phenomenon from Classical Antiquity to the emergence of the 'Grand Tour', passing through the development of thermal tourism.

According to Ritchie e Goeldner (1994), the study of the past growth and development of the many facets of tourism provides the context for evaluating the industry today. Indeed, historical research can greatly contribute to the development and understanding of tourism. Not only by documenting the past, but also by identifying the potential for attraction. Thus, greatly expanding historic restoration and interpretation, as tourist attractions, requires rigorous research into past events and the details of places and vernacular architecture. Modern tourists increasingly require a sophisticated description and presentation of historic sites (Ritchie & Goeldner, 1994).

5. Results

In this article we present some testimonies of travelers from the 15th, 17th and 18th century – without claiming to be exhaustive. These travelers made, in their journey through the country, a description of the city of Porto. The first account we present is one of the oldest descriptions of our country and is from the work of Gilles Le Bouvier “herald of the king of arms of Charles VII king of France.” (Buescu, 2019, p. 194). This traveler refers to the main Iberian rivers that flow into Portugal, referring specifically to the Douro River which, according to him, is born in Burgos and meets the sea in Portugal.

In turn, the Bohemian nobleman Leon de Rosmithal de Blatna (Fabié, 1889), who was in the Iberian Peninsula from 1465 to 1467, describes the city of Porto, referring to the episcopal palace, referring that the city is located between two hills and close to the sea. However, he sees numerous vessels, mentioning that numerous goods from other seas dock here. It also alludes to the infidels who are sold by Christians as slaves and who are taken captive every year. As it could not be otherwise, wine – and the respective fees – is also mentioned by the Bohemian nobleman.

The Polish nobleman Nicolaus Von Popplau, like Blatna, on the journey he undertook from 1484 to 1485, refers to Porto as the best city in the country, with the exception of Lisbon (Liske, 1878).

In turn, Jerónimo Munzer, a doctor and humanist, arrived in Porto from Coimbra, referring to the antiquity of this city located at the foot of a hill. He also mentions the city walls (*Muralha Fernandina*) that are reached by ships when the tide is high (Garcia Mercadal, 1999).

Erich Lassota de Steblovo, another Polish nobleman, refers, in the 16th century, to Porto as being a beautiful, large and industrial city, located on the Douro River that flows into the sea. This soldier refers to the dense, strong and beautiful wall that surrounds the city, he also mentions that above the wall you can go around the city, mentions the beautiful cathedral, churches and monasteries of the same city (Liske, 1878).

Sometimes travelers offer wrong information, as is the case with the Dutch humanist Henrique Cock (Garcia Mercadal, 1999), who, at the end of the 15th century, refers to the city of Porto as having been formerly founded by the French.

The account of the journey undertaken by the abbot of Clairvaux, Dom Edme of Saulieu, written by his secretary, Friar Claude of Bronseval is perhaps the most interesting of all due to its thoroughness. These regular clerics undertook an itinerary, in 1531-1533, through Portugal, intending to visit Cistercian monasteries with "reformist purposes" (Marques, 1997, p. 112). The travellers were often received with acrimony by communities refractory to the visit and the reform it implied.

Bronseval mentions that they both travelled long distances to find accommodation in the city of Porto. When they finally got a place to stay it was very bad and they were miserably treated and housed (Bronseval, 1970). Bronseval then gives a description of the city of Porto. He states that the city is built on two hills separated by a small valley. He also mentions the Ferdinand fortress, adding that Porto is enclosed by an imposing wall of ashlar, very strong and copiously covered with towers from the top to the river where it descends. This river, rather large and deep, he adds, is called the Douro. This watercourse surrounds the lower part of the city where the port is located, with a great number of vessels coming from all over the country. He also refers to the sea, which he says is a league away, and which strengthens and inflates the river. Both of them see a great amount of merchandise in the harbour. As regards the sociological characterization of the native population, for Bronseval, it is very rough and tough, lacking urbanity. As for minorities, for him there are more Jews and Moors in this place than Portuguese, and the Gaul finds them everywhere in the squares. At the top of a hill (the hill of Pena

Ventosa) stands the Cathedral. Bronseval ends his portrait on a picturesque note, mentioning that they could not visit it because they were expelled "by a kind of bearded, barbaric brute, who drove us out like dogs with a stick" (Bronseval, 1970, p. 315).

Jacobo Sobieski, also a Polish nobleman, refers, in 1611, to the undefeated city as a beautiful city, situated between mountains, possessing a very good port, which gave it its name (Liske, 1878).

French cartographer Albert Jouvin praises the quality of the port of the Invicta city (Garcia Mercadal, 1999). In 1699, Father François de Tours refers to Porto as a large and beautiful city and the most pleasant in the whole country (Serrão, 1958). For the French, the city streets were wide and very clean. It also makes mention of ships anchored along the city walls. Likewise, he refers to the dangerousness of the bar and the aesthetic quality of the convents in the city.

In 1702, William Bromley, a British politician, refers to the city of Porto as a beautiful city, well built, with well-paved streets and cleaner than those of the capital. He mentions the monastery of Serra do Pilar, located on the other side of the Douro River and where about 45 friars of Saint Augustine lived. He also praises the beauty of four parish churches. Bromley (1702) maintains that the Cathedral is much smaller than its counterparts in his country. The Fernandina wall is also referenced and Bromley (1702), who estimates the population of the city and its suburbs at 50,000 souls.

6. Final remarks

In the Middle Ages, traveling increased the circulation of news and stimulated the propagation of cultural practices, as well as contributing to closer ties between peoples. However, traveling often proved to be a dangerous enterprise, one that persuaded travelers to travel in groups. In the 15th and 16th centuries the situation was similar and the circulation of goods in the internal space was difficult. At that time, the complex of Portuguese roads was still similar to the one that punctuated in the Middle Ages, which, in turn, was a tributary of the great Roman roads (Marques, 1997). Most of these paths were unpaved. In spite of everything, according to Magalhães (1997), there is care on the part of the local authorities in the erection and maintenance of communication routes. There are even roads that can be traveled by oxcarts around Porto and Braga.

In inns and hostels, according to José Marques (1997, p.99), "passersby could find little more than a light meal, a fire to warm themselves up, water, salt and a lamp".

Frequently, river water courses interrupted pedestrian paths, this obstacle was overcome through bridges, fillies and piers. Nevertheless, the maritime routes were primordial and allowed the boats the fluvial penetration towards the interior of the country, or on the contrary. The river articulation between the city of Porto and its hinterland was not easy: "navigation along the Douro was not easy, and in 1531 it was hampered by the fishing devices that the fishermen used to build in them" (Magalhães, 1997, p. 291).

The results of the present investigation should be useful for the marketing managers of the Porto destination. In fact, by making known the evolution of the tourist image of Porto, the publicity of these results, in the form of a scientific article, may contribute to the management and dissemination of this tourist destination in a more authentic way, differentiating it. In a time of great competition between city breaks destinations, this aspect can be relevant. On the other hand, the opinions of foreigners who, over time, described what they felt during their stay in Porto, can be used by tour operators to get to know their source market better, since some of them share the nationality of these travelers who described the *invicta* city in the 15th, 16th, 17th and 18th centuries.

The accounts of the city of Porto that have been highlighted here came from the pen of travellers with very diverse profiles: military personnel, nobles, clergymen, diplomats and scientists, among others. Although some of the accounts herein may constitute unfounded stereotypes, most travellers' observations of geographical, sociological and cultural realities give us an idea of what the city of Porto would have been like in the early modern age. An idiosyncratic image leaks out of the travel books that emphasise the Douro River as a connexion between the city and its hinterland. The mercantile character of Porto is also valued in the accounts, the omnipresence of ships anchored in the Douro bar and the quality of its port. The industrious nature of the city, the quality of its streets and the aesthetic appeal of its churches, convents and monasteries equally seduce

foreign travellers. Another distinctive feature of the city that is often referred to, in addition to the hills that characterise the topography of the city, is the Fernandina wall, which is an epitome of the Gothic city.

We believe that these elements, together with the ubiquitous Porto wine, constitute Porto's unique selling proposition. These are unique and unrepeatable features that can help marketers disseminate a concise and coherent image of the destination Porto.

Due to the scarcity of sources available for such a remote period, the current article does not present a set of representations as varied as would be desirable. Therefore, future studies that focus on the reports of travellers from the 18th and 19th century can cement these results or offer them new nuances.

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