

CIÊNCIAS SOCIALMENTE APLICÁVEIS E HUMANIDADES:

SABERES, PRÁTICAS E HORIZONTES DE INVESTIGAÇÃO

JESÚS RIVAS GUTIÉRREZ
(ORGANIZADOR)

VOL II



EDITORA
ARTEMIS
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PRÓLOGO

El volumen II de **Ciencias Socialmente Aplicables y Humanidades: Saberes, Prácticas y Horizontes de Investigación** reúne en un libro ponencias elaboradas por autores de América Latina, Europa y Asia producto de investigaciones que interpretan y dialogan con algunos de los desafíos más críticos y urgentes del Siglo XXI como lo es las prácticas educativas en contextos diversos, sostenibilidad y calidad de vida, diversidad y justicia social, transformación digital y vida organizacional en donde se refleja una diversidad de enfoques y tradiciones académicas que convergen en una misma dirección: comprender las realidades contemporáneas desde diferentes perspectivas y al mismo tiempo proponer horizontes innovadores y transformadores.

El primer eje, **Educación, Políticas del Conocimiento y Prácticas Formativas**, concentra análisis que problematizan los procesos de enseñanza-aprendizaje, la formación docente, las políticas lingüísticas, los currículos, las metodologías de intervención y las disputas simbólicas en torno a la producción del conocimiento. Este eje reafirma la educación como un campo estratégico para la transformación social y cultural, la emancipación de los sujetos y la construcción de sociedades más justas y democráticas.

El segundo eje, **Sostenibilidad, Territorios y Calidad de Vida**, reúne trabajos que presentan los desafíos y dificultades en las relaciones entre desarrollo, crecimiento, medio ambiente, turismo, productividad, envejecimiento, abandono social y soberanía territorial y alimentaria. Los textos que integran este eje evidencian la centralidad del territorio como espacio de disputa y poder, de pertenencia e identidad, de producción de sentidos y construcción de alternativas sostenibles para la mejora de las condiciones de vida de las poblaciones.

El tercer eje, **Género, Diversidad y Justicia Social**, aborda temas fundamentales relacionados con las desigualdades estructurales que atraviesan, diferencian y dividen a las sociedades contemporáneas. Las reflexiones aquí reunidas enfrentan los prejuicios, las discriminaciones, las interseccionalidades y los mecanismos sutiles de reproducción de las desigualdades, al mismo tiempo que evidencian estrategias de resistencia, reconocimiento y transformación social.

El cuarto eje, **Transformación Digital, Gestión Organizacional e Innovación en Empresas**, reúne contribuciones orientadas a la comprensión de las organizaciones empresariales en contextos complejos, dinámicos y atravesados por la incertidumbre. Este eje articula aspectos sobre gestión, pertenencia e identidad organizacional, cultura institucional, liderazgo, procesos de cambio, clima organizacional e innovación

empresarial e institucional, tanto en el sector privado como en el público, con especial atención a las instituciones educativas y a las organizaciones insertas en entornos de rápida transformación tecnológica.

Al articular estos cuatro ejes, esta obra evidencia la riqueza, la diversidad y la potencialidad de las Ciencias Socialmente Aplicables para interpretar los fenómenos laborales y sociales en su diversidad y complejidad y al mismo tiempo proponer caminos posibles de intervención, innovación y transformación.

Esperamos que estos trabajos contribuyan al fortalecimiento del pensamiento crítico, al diálogo múltiple e interdisciplinario y al avance de la comprensión de las diversas realidades locales, regionales, nacionales y globales, así como al fortalecimiento de mayor número de investigaciones comprometidas con la educación como práctica transformadora, con el desarrollo sostenible, la justicia social y la innovación organizacional.

Deseamos al lector una lectura interesante, reflexiva, provocadora e inspiradora.

Jesús Rivas Gutiérrez

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FATORES-CHAVE DE INTERNACIONALIZAÇÃO DE DESTINOS TURÍSTICOS: TERRITÓRIO, PRODUTO, GOVERNANÇA E DMO

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RESUMO: Este artigo apresenta a validação empírica de um modelo reflexivo, de terceira ordem, para a internacionalização de destinos turísticos, ancorado em quatro dimensões: território, produto (competitividade do destino e de produto), governança e DMO. O estudo utiliza um inquérito transversal a DMO portuguesas com responsabilidades no turismo e no desenvolvimento local/regional (470 entidades; 47 respostas válidas), aplicado em 2018. O instrumento agregou subescalas previamente validadas e a estimação foi realizada por modelação de equações estruturais. O modelo evidenciou bom ajustamento global e cargas fatoriais robustas nas quatro dimensões, confirmando a validade do constructo e a consistência interna. Os resultados mostram que território e produto ancoram o mapeamento e o posicionamento do destino – via diferenciação, imagem e atratividade –, ao passo que governança e DMO cumprem uma função integradora, assegurando a coordenação em rede, coerência de políticas e capacidade de execução coletiva. Considera-se que a internacionalização de destinos exige, simultaneamente, bases territoriais e de produto sólidas, em simultâneo com arranjos de governança que mobilizem atores, recursos e informação. Em termos de política, recomenda-se o reforço da governança multinível, o investimento na capacitação das DMO e a priorização de instrumentos de inovação, *branding* e inteligência artificial, que

sustentem decisões estratégicas e parcerias público-privadas, visando competitividade e projeção externa.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: internacionalização; destinos turísticos; governança; DMO; modelação de equações estruturais.

KEY DRIVERS OF DESTINATION INTERNATIONALIZATION: TERRITORY, PRODUCT, GOVERNANCE, AND DMOs

ABSTRACT: This article presents the empirical validation of a third-order reflective model for the internationalisation of tourism destinations, anchored in four dimensions: territory, product (competitiveness of the destination and of the product), governance, and DMOs. The study draws on a cross-sectional survey of Portuguese DMOs with responsibilities in tourism and local/regional development (470 entities; 47 valid responses), administered in 2018. The instrument combined previously validated subscales and was estimated using structural equation modelling. The model exhibited good overall fit and robust factor loadings across the four dimensions, confirming construct validity and internal consistency. The results show that territory and product underpin destination mapping and positioning – via differentiation, image, and attractiveness – whereas governance and DMOs play an integrating role, ensuring networked coordination, policy coherence, and collective execution capacity. We argue that destination internationalisation simultaneously requires solid territorial and product foundations alongside governance arrangements that mobilise actors, resources, and information. In policy terms, we recommend strengthening multi-level governance, investing in DMO capacity-building, and prioritising instruments of innovation, branding, and artificial intelligence to support strategic decision-making and public–private partnerships, with a view to competitiveness and external projection.

KEYWORDS: internationalisation; tourism destinations; governance; DMOs; structural equation modelling.

1. INTRODUCTION

The internationalisation of tourism destinations has gained prominence in research and practice, accompanying the intensification of flows, the diversification of demand, and growing inter-territorial competition. In the specialist literature, tourism is frequently conceptualised as a system integrating multiple actors, resources, and institutions, whose coordination conditions value creation and the competitive positioning of destinations (Bohlin, Brandt, & Elbe, 2016; Booyens, 2016; Brouder & Ioannides, 2014). From this systemic perspective, four structuring domains emerge as axes for analysis and action: territory, product, governance, and destination management organisations (DMOs). Territory provides the material and symbolic base – natural and cultural resources, landscape, accessibility, and relational density – upon which narratives of authenticity and value propositions are constructed. Product translates these assets into competitive, differentiated experiences, combining quality, innovation, and segment

fit. Governance refers to the rules, processes, and instruments that guide collective decision-making, and DMOs perform an integrating function, articulating actors and scales, mobilising resources, and ensuring strategic coherence.

The study presented here draws on data collected in 2018 from Portuguese DMOs with responsibilities in tourism and local/regional development. This temporal cut captures the institutional “voice” in a context of global sectoral expansion, immediately prior to the pandemic shock. The third-order reflective model validated in this chapter – which integrates, in a higher-order construct, the four dimensions noted – enables an articulated assessment of the structuring factors of internationalisation. The analysis is subsequently interpreted in the light of the post-COVID-19 debate, juxtaposing the concerns and priorities identified by DMOs in 2018 with the recovery and transformation requirements discussed after the crisis. We are particularly interested in whether the conditions deemed necessary before the pandemic remain current, explanatory, and operationalizable to sustain destinations’ external projection and response capacity.

The theoretical framing mobilises contributions from the “new economies” (territorial economy/economic geography), underscoring that competitiveness and internationalisation depend on knowledge networks, smart specialisation, and multi-level coordination among public, private, and associative agents (Booyens, 2016; Carr, 2020; Çakar & Uzut, 2020; Makkonen & Rhode, 2016; Vodeb & Rudež, 2016). From this vantage point, governance and networks operate as facilitating mechanisms of integration, generating incentive alignment, policy coherence, and collective execution capacity. Post-pandemic literature reinforces this reading, indicating that collaborative arrangements, transparency, and consistent communication are critical for restoring market and consumer confidence, reactivating value chains, and attracting investment (Gyimóthy, & Wilson, Pérez, Meged & Wilson, 2020; Renaud, 2020; Toanoglou, Chemli & Valeri, 2022).

The gap addressed by this chapter lies in the need for an integrated empirical operationalisation of destination internationalisation that simultaneously (a) captures the differentiated contribution of territory and product to mapping and positioning, and (b) makes explicit the integrating role of governance and DMOs in networked coordination and the coherence of public policies. By proposing and validating a third-order model, we move beyond unidimensional approaches, offering a systemic and measurable reading of the phenomenon.

On this basis, the chapter pursues three objectives: (1) to validate empirically a third-order reflective model for destination internationalisation anchored in the four dimensions noted; (2) to situate the 2018 results within the post-COVID-19 debate, discussing the continued relevance of the conditions identified by DMOs for destinations’

response capacity and repositioning; and (3) to derive implications for policy design and DMO management, notably with respect to instruments of innovation, branding, and intelligence that support strategic decision-making and public–private partnerships.

The chapter's contributions are threefold. First, the theoretical contribution integrates territory, product, governance, and DMOs within a single higher-order construct, clarifying roles: territory and product as the bases for mapping/positioning, and governance/DMOs as integration and territorial organisation/management. Second, the methodological contribution highlights the use of structural equation modelling to assess construct validity and model fit, providing comparable metrics for future research. Third, the practical–policy contribution offers guidance for multi-level governance models, DMO capacity-building, and the prioritisation of instruments of innovation, branding, and intelligence (including artificial intelligence), to underpin decision-making and strengthen competitiveness and external projection (Ahmad, Jamaludin, Zuraimi & Valeri, 2021).

Finally, the chapter is organised as follows: the next section presents the literature review, followed by the methodology, which includes target population, sampling, instrument, and estimation procedures. We then present the model results and principal validity tests, followed by the discussion, which articulates empirical evidence and implications for public policy and destination management. Lastly, we outline limitations and avenues for future research, with particular attention to replication in other geographical contexts and to longitudinal analyses tracking internationalisation dynamics across the destination life cycle.

2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Research on the internationalisation of destinations has increasingly converged on the existence of four mutually reinforcing vectors – territory, product, governance, and DMOs – that shape a place's ability to enhance its competitive capacity by attracting demand at a global scale. Current specialist literature emphasises that territorial endowments should be converted into differentiated products through coordinated governance and professionalised destination management, underpinned by sustainability metrics and stakeholder participation. This section synthesises that evidence and positions these vectors as the systemic backbone of destination internationalisation. It further argues that decision-support tools, such as artificial intelligence, together with indicator systems, enable this vision to be operationalised in concrete policies and investments tailored to local realities. The foundational significance of these measures becomes most evident in times of crisis.

The COVID 19 pandemic has had devastating effects on tourism, reminding us of the need to make tourist destinations resilient to the various crises that can weaken them (Carr, 2020). Environmental sustainability, communities' well-being and tourists' safety emerge as conditions determining the future of this sector (Aebli, Volgger & Taplin, 2022; Aleshinloye, Woosnam, Tasci & Ramkissoon, 2022; Bhati, Mohammadi, Agarwal, Kamble & Donough-Tan, 2020). A strategy to reinvigorate local economies could be to spread this message to the markets, due to the positive effect of this message on tourist flows (Gyimóthy et al., 2020; Ianioglo & Rissanen, 2020). However, the conceptual, political, and operational articulation of all these factors is not an easy task and requires government responses to support the reconstruction of tourist infrastructure. Providing destinations with the skills to resist crises implies a continuous strategy of technological innovation of the offer, in which digital marketing plays a central role in disseminating an image capable of allaying the 'fears' of demand and restoring market confidence (Fu, 2020; Ivars-Baidal, Celdrán-Bernabeu, Femenia-Serra, Perles-Ribes & Giner-Sánchez, 2021; Moreno-Luna, Robina-Ramirez, Sánchez & Castro-Serrano, 2021; Nunes & Cooke, 2021; Sheller, 2020 ; Toanoglou et al., 2022).

Support for innovative technological projects (inclusion of digital infrastructure in the production system) should be a political priority for the recovery of the sector, in the scope of a shared economy resulting from social models of well-being. The financing of these projects by Public Administration can make destinations more resilient, because it attracts investment, generates qualified jobs and involves a significant number of local actors. These appear to be some of the necessary conditions to encourage network governance models for the territory (Arbolino, Boffardi, De Simone & Ioppolo, 2021; Chica, Hernández & Bulchand-Gidumal, 2021; Čorak, Živoder & Marušić, 2021). This process requires communication skills that help state policies translate into direct support for destinations' project and product innovation (Badulescu, Hoffman, Badulescu & Badulescu, 2016; Bernabé & Hernández, 2016). In this way, local policies should focus on innovation and planning, highlighting skills, people, and natural and cultural resources, aiming to present creative and differentiated tourism products (Booyens, 2016). For public policies to be a vector of development and economic diversification, they must be accompanied by scientific and technical concerns. In other words, politics comes closer to the economy through knowledge. In this context, Destination Management Organizations (DMOs) are facing new challenges.

Local economic and innovation policies are the engine, or the hindrance, of contemporary regional competitive capacity, because it is these that create the legal,

regulatory and financial conditions, at the territorial level, that stimulate innovation, knowledge and creativity:

- a) The political focus is on the intrinsic assets and capacities of a given territory, promoting creative solutions that stimulate growth and ensure the region's competitiveness (Booyens, 2016).
- b) Territorial planning must consider the existing human potential, as well as the ability to attract "talent" to the destination, requiring continuous and systematic work of organization in a network of the various entities, from various sectors of activity (Bernabé & Hernandez, 2016).
- c) Public decision-makers are the most influential actors in promoting innovation in the regions, because they are the ones who create the measures and instruments that facilitate entrepreneurship and the establishment of investment in territories (Bannó, Piscitello & Varum 2015; Makkonen & Rhode, 2016).
- d) Creative tourism requires a sustainable development policy in planning, especially in urban spaces, promoting smart destinations (Makkonen & Weidenfel, 2016).
- e) Public entities should redirect their attention to the consolidation of strategic networks, which ensure the transfer of external knowledge to the interior of destinations, instead of focusing all their attention on marketing and promotion (Szytniewski, Spierings & van der Velde, 2017).
- f) Strong political commitment to the economy and innovation also raises other problems, namely the existence of sufficiently qualified human resources in the region (Getz & Page, 2016).
- g) The more skills and knowledge held by local actors, the greater their desire to participate and influence policies and strategies with an impact on the region in which they reside (Vodeb & Rudež, 2016).
- h) Following a model of territorial development supported by the knowledge economy often triggers feelings of belonging and stakeholders' active participation in the destination project (Scuttari, Volgger & Pechlaner, 2016).
- i) Transforming regions into territorial innovation systems implies creating networked regional governance structures (Blasco, Guia & Prats, 2014; Weidenfeld, 2013).
- j) Public policies must consider regional differences and destinations' degree of maturity, as not all are at the same stage of development, and not all have

the same wealth of resources or support infrastructure, among other aspects (Bohlin et al., 2016).

- k) The formulation of policies must take this territorial diversity into account and reward both external investors and local entrepreneurs or projects, which truly contribute to the innovation of the offer, renewing and diversifying more traditional products and services (Kallmuenzer, Lorenzo, Siller, Rojas, & Kraus, 2021; Sanz-Ibáñez & Clavé, 2016).
- l) The more effective local authorities are in defending the harmony between policies and innovation, based on the identity of spaces, the easier it becomes to promote the destination as a whole and to attract markets that are important for regions' development (Sertakova, Koptseva, Kolesnik, Libakova, Luzan & Sergeeva, 2016).

The coordinated interplay of sustainability, competitiveness, and destination governance is the pathway to consolidating tourism as an economic engine and a driver of comprehensive territorial development: (i) territorial data metrics are essential to determining where and how to develop sustainable tourism; (ii) local public governance and destination management are the critical success factor in converting resources into competitiveness; (iii) social participation and municipal-level operational guidelines anchor the transition to responsible practices and to destination resilience.

Studies conducted in Portugal, Colombia, and Brazil demonstrate how crucial it is to measure better in order to govern better—and to govern better so that tourism becomes genuinely sustainable and competitive. A number of studies are presented that illustrate and clarify this theme:

- a) **Territory versus Planning** – In Portugal's Beira Baixa (the country's central inland region), Geographic Information Systems (GIS) were employed to map ecotourism units, coupled with an assessment of the internal consistency of decision-making preferences using the Analytic Hierarchy Process (AHP). The territorial analysis considered the following criteria: integration and conservation of nature; avian and mammalian diversity; geological value; water resources; the trail network; and landscape diversity and value. The study identifies areas with high potential for rural tourism and advocates a participatory governance model for implementation and ongoing monitoring (Quinta-Nova & Ferreira, 2022).
- b) **Sustainability versus Governance – A Guide to Sustainability and Social Responsibility** for local authorities was developed, grounded

in four principles (cooperate, conserve, promote, position) and three axes: sociocultural (integration of residents/stakeholders; hospitality), environmental (awareness-raising, volunteering, training for responsible consumption), and economic (public support, incentives for SMEs, upgrading the offer), incorporating circular-economy practices (4R). The guide emphasises transparency, communication (WOM/eWOM), and community co-creation; municipal leadership emerges as the linchpin of change and of territorial competitiveness (Roriz & Oliveira, 2023). In this context, the importance of indicators is underscored by a study conducted in Portugal's Algarve (a southern sun-and-sea destination), which applied a sustainability measurement indicator to three mass-tourism destinations. The instrument aggregates more than 2,000 weighted items and aligns with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). It captured concerns about overcrowding and the landscape and economic transformation of the destinations, pointing to differentiated strategies rooted in local public governance with active resident participation ("bottom-up"). The index guides the definition of short-, medium- and long-term improvements and is replicable across other contexts and territories (Pimentel de Oliveira & Pitarch-Garrido, 2023).

- c) Competitiveness versus Product** – Research on the Colombian destination of San Carlos, Antioquia, indicates that natural and cultural resources generate competitive advantage only when articulated with built resources and supporting factors, under destination management led by local public authorities. In the absence of integrated governmental leadership, resource endowments do not secure a sustainable competitive position (Marín-Idárraga, Cuartas-Marín, Sanabria-Rangel & Sánchez-Torres, 2023). Tourism as a strategy for local development depends on consistent public policy and inter-municipal coordination (Machado, Sousa, Oliveira, Rocha, Faria & Reis, 2023).

For these reasons, the interface between politics, research and the economy is crucial, because only knowledge can help to define measures that promote relationships between stakeholders, creating new products and leading to the presentation of a coherent, modern and differentiated destination. It is this type of offer that can respond to tourists' current demands, as it enhances the quality of the tourist experience and therefore facilitates the internationalization of tourism destinations (Bohlin et al., 2016).

3. METHOD

3.1. TARGET POPULATION AND SAMPLE CHARACTERIZATION

The target population is composed of 470 public and private Portuguese non-profit organizations, with responsibilities in different areas of tourism, product competitiveness and local/regional development. This includes 427 DMO organizations and 43 sector associations. Thirty organizations have a national scope of influence, 75 have a regional scope of influence, and 365 have a local level of influence. All these organizations, together with the Government, are responsible for defining priorities and actions in the development of the territory, of the products or managing the implementation of public policies concerning tourism. Tourism associations were included, as they play a relevant role in the product's competitive strategy. The non-probabilistic and intentional sample is composed of 147 organizations, the majority being Municipal Councils (69.4%). Seven NUTII locations were considered, the scope of influence ranging from local (70.7%) to international (2.7%) (see Table 1).

Table 1. Sample characterization by DMO characteristics.

		<i>n</i>	%
Organization	Municipal Council	102	69.4
	Development and / or promotion association	12	8.2
	Public entity for development and territorial planning	11	7.5
	Regional tourism entity	7	4.8
	Representative entity of the municipal association	6	4.1
	Sectorial Association	5	3.4
	Tourist Promotion Agency	2	1.4
	<i>Missing values</i>	2	1.4
	Total	147	100
Location (NUT II)	Center	47	32.0
	North	41	27.9
	Lisbon Metropolitan Area	17	11.6
	Alentejo	15	10.2
	Algarve	10	6.8
	Autonomous Region of Azores	8	5.4
	Autonomous Region of Madeira	7	4.8
	<i>Missing values</i>	2	1.4
	Total	147	100
Scope of influence	Local	104	70.7
	Regional	27	18.4
	National	10	6.8
	International	4	2.7
	<i>Missing values</i>	2	1.4
	Total	147	100

The characteristics of the 147 subjects who filled out the questionnaire are shown in Table 2. Most respondents were aged from 35 to 49 years old (63.3%), and there were more females (61.2%) than males (42.5%). The majority are administrative workers (68.7%) and aged from 35 to 49 years-old (63.3%). Most have higher education qualifications at the degree level (45.6%), followed by a master (24.5%) or a postgraduate degree (15.6%).

Table 2. Characterization of participants (N = 147).

		n	%
Sex	Female	90	61.2
	Male	54	36.7
	<i>Missing value</i>	3	2.0
	Total	147	100
Age (years)	$\leq 35 \leq 49$	93	63.3
	$\leq 50 \leq 64$	31	21.1
	$\leq 25 \leq 34$	19	12.9
	$\leq 18 \leq 24$	1	0.7
	<i>Missing value</i>	3	2.0
	Total	147	100
Academic qualifications	Secondary Education (12th year)	8	5.4
	Bachelor	7	4.8
	Degree	67	45.6
	Postgraduate studies	23	15.6
	Master	36	24.5
	PhD	4	2.7
	<i>Missing value</i>	2	1.4
	Total	147	100
Professional category	Administrative	101	68.7
	Director	14	9.5
	Assessor	7	4.8
	President	6	4.1
	Other	17	11.6
	Councillor	5	3.4
	Head of Division	5	3.4
	Head of Unit	3	2.0
	Executive	1	0.7
	Office clerk	1	0.7
	Graduate staff	1	0.7
	Assistant	1	0.7
	<i>Missing value</i>	2	1.4
	Total	147	100

3.2. MATERIALS

Five subscales of tourism destination internalization in Portugal were developed by the authors (Mira, 2018; Mira, Mónico, & Breda, 2021a, 2021b), and have been previously validated with a sample of the Portuguese population: 'territory' (three factors: 'resources', 'economic activity, and 'borders'), 'product competitiveness' (five factors: 'innovation', 'experience', 'people management' technological resources' and entrepreneurship'), 'governance'(two factors: 'collaboration' and 'networks') and 'DMOs' (two factors: 'integrative function' and 'destination promotion'). Each subscale is composed of several items measured on a 7-point Likert scale from 1 = 'Not at all important' to 7 = 'Extremely important'. The Cronbach's alpha of each subscale and constituent dimensions is considered good indicators of reliability, ranging from .78 to .93 (Cohen, 1988; see table 3).

3.3. PROCEDURES

An online version of the questionnaire was sent by e-mail to all Portuguese municipalities, with a reminder one month later to those that had not yet responded, emphasising the importance of their participation. The questionnaire was to be filled in by those with responsibilities in tourism. Information on the study's objectives, completion instructions, the voluntary and anonymous nature of participation, and the guarantee of individual data confidentiality were included, meeting ethical requirements. Each item in the questionnaire was rated on a seven-point Likert scale (from 1 = Not at all important; to 7 = Extremely important, and N/S = I do not know).

3.4. DATA ANALYSIS

Data analysis was performed through the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) and the AMOS for Windows operative system. Outliers were analyzed according to Mahalanobis squared distance (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2013). The normality of the variables was assessed by the coefficients of skewness (Sk) and kurtosis (Ku), showing $|Sk| < 2$ and $|Ku| < 3$ scores.

Since we intend to retain as many independent factors as possible, we chose the VARIMAX rotation method with Kaiser's normalization. Confirmatory factorial analysis (CFA) was performed with AMOS (v. 22.0, SPSS Inc., Chicago, IL; Arbuckle, 2013), and the estimation method by maximum likelihood (Jöreskog & Sörbom, 2004)). Goodness of fit was analyzed by the indexes of NFI (normed fit index; good fit $> .80$; Schumacker

& Lomax, 2016), SRMR (standardized root mean square residual; appropriate fit < .08; Brown, 2015), TLI (Tucker–Lewis index; appropriate fit > .90; Brown, 2015), comparative fit index (good fit > .90; Bentler, 1990), RMSEA (root mean square error of approximation; good fit < .05; Kline, 2011; Schumacker & Lomax, 2012), and χ^2 ($p > .05$, but irrelevant if $N > 500$; Bentler, 1990; Schumacker & Lomax, 2012). The fit of the model was improved by modification indices (MIs; Bollen, 1989), leading to correlation of the residual variability between variables with MI > 90, $p < .001$.

Reliability was calculated through Cronbach's alpha (Nunnally, 1978). Reliability coefficients higher than .70 were considered acceptable for convergence and reliability (Hair, Anderson, Tatham & Black, 2009). In general, the value of .80 was taken as a good reliability indicator. The composite reliability and average variance extracted (AVE) for each factor were evaluated as described in Fornell and Larcker (1981).

4. RESULTS

4.1 DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS AND INTERCORRELATIONS BETWEEN THE DIMENSIONS OF THE INTERNATIONALIZATION OF TOURISM DESTINATIONS

According to table 3, most respondents consider, on average, the factors of tourism destination internalization in Portugal as important (mean scores between $M = 5.37$ for 'economic activity' and $M = 6.44$ for 'people management').

The intercorrelations between all subscales and constituent dimensions are positive, reinforcing the idea that all these dimensions contribute to forming a system concerning the internationalization of tourism destinations. Except for factor 3 ('limits') of the T scale ('territory'), whose correlations are not statistically significant with the two factors of the DMO scale ('DMO function'), with factor 1 ('people management') and factor 2 ('technological resources') of the PC scale ('product competitiveness') and factor 1 ('collaboration') of the DG scale ('destination governance') (Table 3).

Table 3. Means (M), standard-deviations (SD), and intercorrelations between the four subscales and respective factors of the Internationalization of tourism destinations: 'territory', 'product', 'governance' and 'DMOs'. (Cronbach's alpha).

	M	SD	T	F1	F2	F3	DC	F1	F2	PC	F1	F2	F3	DG	F1	F2	DMO	F1	F2
T	5.49	0.80	(.86)	.779**	.798**	.560**	.677**	.659**	.543**	.560**	.419**	.419**	.576**	.523**	.458**	.495**	.478**	.455**	.362**
F1	6.18	0.84		(.89)	.556**	.129	.522**	.439**	.523**	.563**	.498**	.469**	.442**	.521**	.464**	.483**	.477**	.427**	.439**
F2	5.37	1.22			(.88)	.103	.644**	.670**	.452**	.485**	.282**	.391**	.566**	.441**	.395**	.405**	.408**	.411**	.250**
F3	4.50	1.44				(.78)	.268**	.279**	.186*	.147	.127	.031	.210*	.155	.119	.170*	.135	.131	.094
DC	5.81	0.82					(.91)	.939**	.854**	.732**	.524**	.615**	.715**	.664**	.574**	.639**	.572**	.528**	.483**
F1	5.52	0.98						(.89)	.624**	.585**	.341**	.513**	.642**	.580**	.486**	.577**	.480**	.458**	.362**
F2	6.19	0.81							(.88)	.780**	.676**	.622**	.654**	.634**	.570**	.581**	.576**	.509**	.550**
PC	6.09	0.69								(.92)	.864**	.829**	.812**	.716**	.622**	.684**	.647**	.583**	.587**
F1	6.44	0.68									(.90)	.576**	.543**	.564**	.493**	.534**	.565**	.495**	.549**
F2	5.88	0.96										(.91)	.522**	.617**	.520**	.612**	.508**	.447**	.489**
F3	5.72	0.95											(.88)	.622**	.554**	.577**	.548**	.519**	.424**
DG	5.94	0.76												(.92)	.931**	.873**	.650**	.610**	.519**
F1	5.91	0.86													(.92)	.634**	.588**	.555**	.462**
F2	5.97	0.81														(.91)	.590**	.550**	.482**
DMO	5.99	0.75															(.92)	.968**	.718**
F1	5.83	0.87																(.93)	.520**
F2	6.37	0.73																	(.88)

** p <.01; * p <.05

Caption: 'Territory' subscale (T): F1 (factor 1 'resources'), F2 (factor 2 'economic activity'); F3 (factor 3 'limits'); 'Destination competitiveness' subscale (DC): F1 (factor 1 'innovation'); F2 (factor 2 'differentiation'); Subscale 'product competitiveness' (PC): F1 (factor 1 'people management'); F2 (factor 2 'technological resources'); F3 (factor 3 'entrepreneurship'); Subscale 'destination governance' (DG): F1 (factor 1 'collaboration'); F2 (factor 2 'networks'); 'function of DMO (DMO) subscale: F1 (factor 1 'integrating function'); F2 (factor 2 'destination promotion').

'Destination competitiveness' (DC) and 'product competitiveness' (PC) present the highest association ($r = .732$), reflecting the 'product' dimension. The subscales with the lowest association, although almost strong ($r = .478$), are 'territory' (T) and 'BMD function' (DMO). The remaining associations can be classified as having a strong effect size (Cohen, 1988), highlighting the relationship between the 'territory' and 'competitiveness' subscales ($r = .677$), on the one hand, and on the other hand, between 'destination governance', 'product competitiveness' ($r = .716$), 'destination competitiveness' ($r = .664$), and 'function of DMO' ($r = .650$).

Considering the relationships between the factors of the 'territory' subscale (T): a) 'resources' (factor 1) is strongly associated ($r = .523$) with 'differentiation' (factor 2 of the DC scale), showing moderate intercorrelations with all other factors; b) 'economic activity' (factor 2) has a strong association with the 'innovation' factor ($r = .670$) of the DC scale and the 'entrepreneurship' factor ($r = .566$) of the PC scale, presenting low intercorrelations with the factors of 'people management' ($r = .282$), 'technological resources' ($r = .391$), 'collaboration' ($r = .395$), and 'promotion' ($r = .250$); c) factor 3 'thresholds' reveals weak correlations with all scales and constituent factors.

Regarding the relationship between the factors of 'destination competitiveness' (DC): a) 'innovation' (factor 1) reveals strong associations with 'technological resources' (factor 2; $r = .513$) and with 'entrepreneurship' (factor 3; $r = .642$), of the PC subscale ('product competitiveness') and with factor 2 'networks' ($r = .577$) of the DG scale ('destination governance'); b) 'differentiation' (factor 2) is strongly associated with all other factors, except for factors 2 ('economic activity') and 3 ('limits') of the T subscale ('territory'). The strongest associations are identified with 'people management' (factor 1; $r = .676$), 'entrepreneurship' (factor 3; $r = .654$) and 'technological resources' (factor 2; $r = .622$), all of the PC subscale.

Concerning the 'product competitiveness' (PC) subscale: a) 'people management' (factor 1) has a strong association with 'differentiation' (factor 2; $r = .676$) of the PC subscale ('destination competitiveness'), as well as with 'promotion' (factor 2; $r = .549$) from the 'DMO function' scale, and with 'networks' (factor 2; $r = .534$) from the DG scale ('destination governance'); b) 'technological resources' (factor 2) reveals strong associations with the two factors of the DC subscale and the two factors of the DC subscale; c) 'entrepreneurship' (factor 3) is more associated with 'innovation' ($r = .642$) of the DC subscale and 'networks' ($r = .654$) of the DG subscale.

Regarding the intercorrelations between the factors of the 'destination governance' (DG) subscale: a) 'collaboration' (factor 1) reveals stronger associations with

'differentiation' (factor 2; $r = .570$) of the DC subscale, 'entrepreneurship' (factor 3; $r = .554$) of the PC subscale, and with 'integrating function' (factor 1; $r = .555$) of the 'DMO function' subscale; b) 'networks' (factor 2) is more associated with 'technological resources' (factor 2; $r = .612$) of the PC scale, and with 'innovation' (factor 1; $r = .577$) and 'differentiation' ($r = .581$), both from the DC scale.

Finally, concerning the two factors on the 'function of DMO' subscale: a) 'integrating function' (factor 1) is more associated with 'collaboration' (factor 1; $r = .555$) and 'networks' (factor 2; $r = .550$), both of the DG scale; b) 'destination promotion' (factor 2) is more correlated with 'differentiation' (factor 2; $r = .550$) of the DC scale and with 'people management' (factor 1; $r = .549$) of the PC scale.

4.2. STRUCTURAL MODEL OF DESTINATION INTERNATIONALIZATION

This section presents the estimated structural model of destination internationalization, using structural equation modeling (Byrne, 2010; Hoyle, 2012) (see Figure 1). The subscales previously validated and defined in this study are included in this model: territory, product, governance, and DMO. These subscales will be analyzed using latent variables as validated constructs and their dimensions as composite scores of their observed variables. The trajectory diagram was specified as being reflexive (Byrne, 2010; Kline, 2011; Schumacker & Lomax, 2010), the product dimension being reflected in two constituent sub-dimensions – 'Destination competitiveness' (DC) and 'Product competitiveness' (PC), resulting in a third-order factorial model.

The estimated structural model showed good fit considering the NFI = .921, SRMR = .047, TLI = .952, CFI = .966, and $\chi^2/46 = 1.66$. The RMSEA = .06 indicates an acceptable fit for this index (90 CI ranged from .039 to .093, $p < .001$).

Table 5 presents the non-standardized (b) and standardized regression weights (β / λ), the standard errors (SE), and the critical ratios (CR) for the structural model. All estimated parameters are statistically significant, with the exception of the Territory→Limits ($p = .07$) trajectory.

Table 4. Proposed structural model of the internationalization of tourist destinations: non-standardized (b) and standardized regression weights (β / λ), standard errors (SE), and critical ratios (CR).

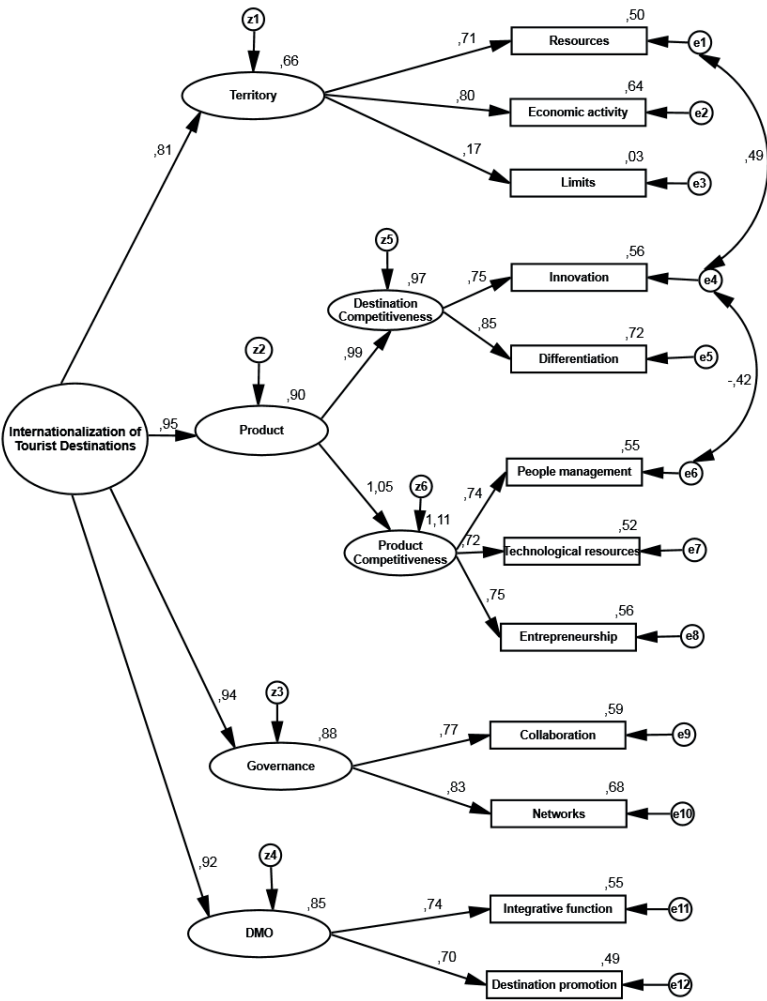
Subscales		Factors	b	SE	CR	β / λ
Internationalization of Tourism Destinations	→	Product	1.03	0.13	8.00*	0.95
	→	Governance	0.96	0.15	6.59*	0.94
	→	DMO	0.92	0.14	6.38*	0.92
	→	Territory	1.00a			0.81

Subscales		Factors	b	SE	CR	β / λ
Territory (R2 = .66)	→	Resources	1.00 a			0.71
	→	Economic activity	0.83	0.11	7.44*	0.80
	→	Limits	0.30	0.17	1.81	0.17
Product (R2 = .90)	→	Product Competitiveness	0.75	0.10	7.71*	1.05
	→	Destination Competitiveness	1.00 a			0.99
Destination Competitiveness (R2 = .97)	→	Innovation	1.00 a			0.75
	→	Differentiation	0.96	0.09	10.37*	0.85
Product Competitiveness (R2 = 1.11)	→	People management	1.00 a			0.75
	→	Technological resources	1.37	0.15	8.93*	0.7
	→	Entrepreneurship	1.42	0.15	9.35*	0.75
Governance (R2 = .88)	→	Collaboration	1.00 a			0.77
	→	Networks	1.01	0.10	9.85*	0.83
DMO (R2 = .85)	→	Integrative function	1.00 a			0.74
	→	Destination promotion	0.79	0.10	7.70*	0.70

* p < .001

Figure 1 presents the estimated model. As can be seen, the internationalization of tourist destinations is highly reflected in the four defined dimensions, namely: 66% of explained variance in the territory dimension ($\beta = .81$); 90% of the product dimension ($\beta = .95$); 88% of governance ($\beta = .94$); and 85% of DMO ($\beta = .92$). Modification indices suggest correlation of the residual variability associated with the 'resources' factor of the 'territory' dimension and 'innovation' of the second-order factor 'product', sub-dimension 'destination competitiveness', as well as the residual variability of the factors of 'innovation' and 'people management' (belonging to the 'product' dimension, sub-dimension of 'product competitiveness'. This last intercorrelation is negative ($r = -.42$), indicating that the proportion of residual variability associated with these two factors varies inversely.

Figure 1. Internationalization of Tourist Destinations: Estimated 3rd order reflexive factorial model (standardized regression coefficients and R2).



Regarding the territory dimension, the model shows that ‘economic activity’ explains R2 = 64% of variance, followed by ‘resources’ (R2 = 50% of explained variance). Concerning the product dimension – destination competitiveness sub-dimension – ‘differentiation’ presents a higher explained variance (R2 = 72%), followed by ‘innovation’ (R2 = 56%). As for the product competitiveness sub-dimension, the proportions of explained variance are very similar, being R2 = 52% for ‘technological resources’ and ‘entrepreneurship’ (R2= 56%) and R2 = 55% for ‘people management’ R2 =55%). The governance dimension is reflected in R2 = 59% of variance explained by ‘collaboration’ and R2 = 68% by ‘networks’. Finally, the DMOs are reflected in R2 = 55% in the ‘integrating function’ and R2 = 49% in the ‘destination promotion’.

5. DISCUSSION

The findings indicate that destination internationalisation rests on four interdependent components – territory, product, governance model, and DMOs. Territory and product constitute the destination's structural base: they confer geographical identity and underpin competitiveness, operationalised through territorial mapping and strategic positioning. Governance and DMOs function as integrative mechanisms that create the enabling conditions for development and international reach by orchestrating collaborative, networked stakeholder management (Badulescu et al., 2016; Bannò et al., 2015).

This agenda remains highly salient. The prolonged turbulence affecting tourism continues to raise substantive policy questions about destination management (Ivars-Baidal et al., 2021). At the core lies the dynamic interdependence between governance arrangements and the trajectory of tourism activity. Managing this nexus necessitates targeted public investment, strategic foresight, and planning calibrated to destination specificities. Many economies seek to raise competitiveness; this is facilitated by accumulated international experience. Inflows of foreign investment build organisational capabilities in international marketing, market intelligence, and opportunity recognition, which, over time, strengthen competitive advantage. Consequently, perspectives on regional development have shifted, emphasising the need to situate policy within each spatial context (Brouder & Ioannides, 2014). Strengthening regional competitiveness and local economic development, in turn, catalyses the internationalisation of destinations (Bannò et al., 2015). Mapping the drivers of these dynamics is thus central to informed policy design.

Notably, regional economies are re-scaled in ways that appear to elevate the regional vis-à-vis the international (Bohlin et al., 2016; Clavé & Wilson, 2017). To enhance market visibility and competitive capacity, regional tourism firms require intelligent information systems and public–private partnerships that project, and protect, a coherent destination image (Ianioglo & Rissanen, 2020). Such arrangements improve investment attraction, diversify the offer, and diffuse benefits to the wider economy and resident well-being. DMOs are pivotal in orchestrating this integrative management, deploying network governance models that rebuild trust among tourists and residents alike (Gyimóthy et al., 2020; Renaud, 2020; Toanoglou et al., 2022). Theoretically, the link between these factors and the necessity of governmental responses has already been articulated, with trust-restoration for tourists and residents identified as a foundational strategy (Fu, 2020; Ivars-Baidal, Celdrán-Bernabeu, Femenia-Serra, Perles-Ribes & Giner-Sánchez, 2021; Moreno-Luna, Robina-Ramirez, Sánchez & Castro-Serrano, 2021; Nunes & Cooke, 2021; Sheller, 2020; Toanoglou et al., 2022).

Empirically, the strong associations between ‘economic activity’ and ‘innovation’, and between the ‘territory’ and ‘product’ scales (Table 3; Figure 2), corroborate the mutually reinforcing relationship between innovation and economic development and offer practical signposts for sectoral recovery. Further links – among ‘entrepreneurship’, ‘technology’, and ‘people management’ – suggest the enabling conditions for territorial innovation (Makkonen & Rohde, 2016): (i) knowledge transfer to firms; (ii) relationship-building that strengthens ties and collective learning; (iii) attention to residents’ quality of life; and (iv) governance models that connect these dimensions to politics. In short, product development must place innovation at its core if the visitor experience is to keep pace with evolving demand. Delivering such offers requires deeper cross-sector collaboration and shared product-definition strategies (Bernabé & Hernández, 2016; Blasco et al., 2014; Bohlin et al., 2016; Booyens, 2016). Collaboration can, and often should, extend across competitive boundaries, as regional distinctiveness transcends administrative limits and narrow sectoral frames (Badulescu et al., 2016). Creative tourism, by encouraging variety and differentiation, reinvents and adds value to products (Bohlin et al., 2016; Sanz-Ibáñez & Clavé, 2016). Yet ‘novelty’ alone is insufficient: translating regional uniqueness into innovative offers demands shifts in local attitudes and routines – towards planning discipline, evidence-based decision-making, and a shared strategic network for the destination (Szytniewski et al., 2017). Knowledge transfer, product complementarity, inter-destination collaboration, and an innovation-centred strategy all require political sponsorship to enable resource allocation (Bernabé & Hernández, 2016; Bohlin et al., 2016; Getz & Page, 2016; Vodeb & Rudež, 2016).

The pronounced correlation between the ‘governance’ and ‘DMO’ scales underscores the integrative function of DMOs in shaping coherent destinations (Booyens, 2016; Vodeb & Rudež, 2016; Weidenfeld, 2013). Critical domains include planning; resource and infrastructure stewardship; stakeholder coordination; and the marketing and commercialisation of products. Policies that embed collaborative strategies and enable network governance enhance destinations’ capacity to position themselves competitively. In the internationalisation process, DMOs’ role is to articulate and coordinate systems, strategies, policies, interests, and resources (Volgger & Pechlaner, 2015). Deepening this relationship requires clearer vertical delineation of responsibilities (local–regional–national), the cultivation of local learning communities, and the resourcing of political programmes with actionable plans and dedicated budgets (Volgger & Pechlaner, 2015). Where destinations organise around collaborative principles, they are better positioned to internationalise sustainably (Weidenfeld, 2013). Such collaboration entails behavioural,

organisational, and political change to increase the flexibility of mobility – of both people and products. Accordingly, strategic planning for destination internationalisation must internalise these factors (Renaud, 2020).

Conversely, weak coordination among governmental actors and between government, industry, and academia dissipates resources and effort – often because the distinct contributions of each are underestimated. Where key actors work jointly in facing competitive pressures, trust tends to grow, enabling greater collective risk-taking in the pursuit of innovation (Bohlin et al., 2016; Renaud, 2020; Sanz-Ibáñez & Clavé, 2016). Destination image – salient for visitors and residents – is equally consequential. It is intertwined with quality of life, itself shaped by the vitality of economic activity. Positive image perceptions can attract entrepreneurs and highly qualified human capital (Getz & Page, 2016; Kallmuenzer et al., 2021). In this context, e-marketing, digital collateral, and platform-based promotion are not peripheral: they stimulate curiosity, reduce frictions, and facilitate transactions. Policy should therefore prioritise brand strengthening through: (i) an image that resonates with visitors and affirms residents' identity (Ahmad et al., 2021; Blasco et al., 2014; Makkonen & Weidenfeld, 2016); (ii) a brand-management strategy that emphasises distinctive attributes aligned with territorial identity (Ahmad et al., 2021; Sertakova et al., 2016); and (iii) promotional campaigns that convert awareness into visitation (Vermeulen, 2015).

Finally, publicly funded, networked innovation projects that activate regional and local economies – and actively involve residents – should be a policy priority for recovery. Such projects can enhance resilience by unlocking investment, creating quality jobs, and rebuilding societal trust (Arbolino, Boffardi, De Simone & Ioppolo, 2021; Chica, Hernández & Bulchand-Gidumal, 2021; Čorak, Živoder & Marušić, 2021).

6. CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

Territory's cultural identity is projected through destination image, which is shaped by quality of life, economic development, and perceived safety among visitors and residents. During the pandemic, national messaging and policy responses imprinted strongly on perceived safety; travellers gravitated towards familiar, less crowded, and ostensibly reliable places. The implication is clear: development pathways should privilege sustainable, lower-intensity propositions that reflect territorial identity (Moreno-Luna et al., 2021). Regionally embedded social networks can add tangible value for SMEs, balancing entrepreneurial drive with commitments to local social responsibility (Kallmuenzer, 2021). Robust evidence links destination image to visit intention and, ultimately, trip realisation

(Ahmad, 2021). Under such conditions, 'developing tourism' may, paradoxically, entail moderated growth – i.e., steering expansion to align with sustainability thresholds (Çakar & Uzut, 2020). Policies must therefore equip territories with instruments that enable gradual, sequenced transitions. The chosen governance model will determine the capacity to steer towards sustainability; innovation – rooted in place identity – can be a decisive lever.

Operationally, innovation requires mechanisms for transferring scientific and technical knowledge to firms and attracting highly qualified personnel capable of transforming extant assets into compelling tourism resources. Market appeal, however, also depends on branding and positioning. Internationalisation strategies should thus amplify a differentiated brand, emphasising product uniqueness and the experiential core of the offer. Financial support for internationalisation and entrepreneurship – alongside investments in human capital, technological capabilities, and product quality – will be pivotal. Networked promotion and commercialisation further enhance regional competitive advantage. Policy innovation is most visible in network-based governance models that manage stakeholders, knowledge, and change.

The overarching challenge for recovery – applicable to this and future crises – is to bind DMOs to a governance architecture that is anchored in regional cultural identity, and that can negotiate interests, opportunities, support, and infrastructure. DMOs must be able to mobilise stakeholders around sustainability, people, identity, uniqueness, and authenticity – turning 'legacy' assets into innovative solutions and returning them to the centre of strategic debate.

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SOBRE O ORGANIZADOR

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