THE AZORES SUSTAINABLE TOURISM OBSERVATORY (OTA)

2022 GLOBAL INSTO MEETING

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Introduction

The “Azores Sustainable Tourism Observatory - OTA” was created on December 29, 2006. The main activities in broad terms are the following and will be described in more detail in the following slides:

• Contribute to the sustainable tourism development in the Azores;
• Evaluate the available statistical information;
• Monitor the regional tourism activity;
• Organize and maintain an information system for tourism;
• Disseminate information about regional, national and international tourism;
• Provide statistical and other type of data used for research projects and scientific papers in partnership with the University of the Azores;
• Organize and participate in conferences, seminars, meetings and debate sessions.
OTA offers the following activities, described within the following strategic action vectors that guide its activity:

**Vector A - Monitor**
- Analysis of the main Sustainable Tourism Indicators;
- Statistical Website;
- Sentiment Analysis;
- Survey on the "Satisfaction of the Tourists Visiting the Azores";
- Implementation of a face-to-face survey on "The Opinion of Azorean Residents on the impacts of tourism in the Azores";
- Survey on the Tourism Sustainability Practices Adopted by Azorean Tourism Companies".

**Vector B - Study**
- Scientific Research Project «Azores Green Gardens»;
- Scientific Research Project "Creatour Azores";
- Implementation of Tourism Sustainability Indicators;
  - Scientific Research Project "TOURSIGNAL";
- Scientific Research Project "Azores Digital Innovation Hub".

**Vector C - Inform**
- Updating of the Observatory's Web page and providing its maintenance;
- Presence in social and tourism professional networks;
- Production of a monthly newsletter, including tourism dashboards and tourism trends at national and international level.

**Vector D - Tourism Policy Advising and International Cooperation**
- OTA publications advising the regional tourism authorities on the best sustainable tourism policy options;
- OTA’s affiliation in the United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO);
- OTA’s membership in the International Association of Universities of Third Age (AIUTA);
- OTA’s membership in the International Federation of Technical Analysts (IFTA);
### Partnerships and Participations

#### INTERNATIONAL VS NATIONAL/LOCAL

#### LOCAL/NATIONAL

- Azores DMO
  - University of the Azores
  - Azores Tourism Advisory Board (Azores Tourism DMO)
  - “Sustainable Tourism Observatory of Alentejo” – a member of the UNWTO INSTO network of “Sustainable Tourism Observatories”;
  - “Azores Smart Specialization Strategy” (RIS 3) – Tourism Working Group;
  - Azores Maritime Tourism Operators Association
  - “Portuguese Association of Hotels, Restaurants and Similar” – AHRESP;

#### INTERNATIONAL

- UNWTO INSTO network of “Sustainable Tourism Observatories” (INSTO);
- “European Islands Tourism Observatory” (OTIE);
- Center of Social Studies of the University of Coimbra (CES);
- “International Association of Universities of Third Age” – AIUTA
The integration of the Azores Tourism Observatory (OTA) in the UNWTO INSTO Network, took place in January 2020. It was a major landmark in our history, allowing to network with other INSTO Sustainable Tourism Observatories in Portugal and abroad, sharing information and experiences, improving methodologies and fostering the analysis and monitoring of the tourist activity in the Azores. INSTO provides a major contribution to achieve our ultimate goal of contributing to the development of sustainable tourism in the Azores, within a broader scope of action in the field of Sustainable Development in compliance with the Sustainable Development Goals (SGS) of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, adopted by all United Nations Member States in 2015, as well in compliance with the Certification by “Earth Check” of the Azores as a Sustainable Tourism Destination, according to the Global Sustainable Council (GSC) guidelines, promoted by the Azores DMO.
Survey on the "Satisfaction of the Tourists Visiting the Azores"

The tourist who visited the Azores on IATA Winter 2021/2022:

- Ages between 18 and 34 years.
- The majority of tourists occupy higher management positions and the monthly net income of the household is between €3,000 and €5,000.

Degree of Tourist’s Satisfaction:

- Is, in global terms, very satisfied with the destination's offer;
- Is very satisfied with the sanitary measures imposed at the airports and in the Azorean tourism accommodations;
- Opted for local homestay accommodation and is accompanied by family members;
- Values the opportunity to contemplate the quality of sea water, the hospitality of the local community, and safety as being the main attributes of the destination;
- Considers that there is a need to improve tourism animation services;
- Considers that the destination has a fair price.
- Most likely would recommend the Azores destination to friends and family.
The main results are the following:

• 93.9% of entrepreneurs think that tourism had an impact in property prices increases;
• 72.5% consider that tourism contributes to the recognition of the importance of ecological values;
• Only 25.5% of entrepreneurs think that the local community is involved in tourism planning and in decision-making processes;
• 69.6% of entrepreneurs are aware of sustainable tourism initiatives in the Azores;
• 97.1% carry out selective waste separation;
• 73% of the surveyed entrepreneurs make customers aware of saving water and energy measures (through pamphlets, etc.);
• 58.5% of companies use solar energy;
• 84.4% of investors when buying equipment, certify that it is resistant and designed to be easily repaired;
• 67.0% of entrepreneurs buy fresh products and beverages packaged in reusable and returnable boxes.

Accessible Tourism = Tourism for all

• 15.7% of companies offer accessible parking facilities;
• 25.8% of room and sanitary installations were adapted to accessible tourism;
• 11.1% of companies welcome guest’s guide dogs and essential items to facilitate their stay;
• 1.4% provide information in Braille.
Challenges and Constraints

OTA faces the following main constraints:

• Lack of available and systematically collected data on the performance of the Azorean tourism sector, especially concerning energy consumption, water consumption and waste production by tourism firms and entities;

• Difficulties in reactivating the implementation of tourism companies’ surveys, due to the extreme difficulty in getting responses because of long surveys and some lack of cooperation from many tourism businesses, facing time constraints in a post-pandemic period of tourism recovery and boom in the Azores.
Challenges and Constraints

OTA faces the following major challenges:

• The Azores Tourism Observatory has produced extensive and credible independent technical and scientific work in partnership with the University of the Azores and other foreign Universities, which has sometimes not been properly recognized by local public tourism entities;

• High costs of assembling services and implementing complex projects such as: “Monitoring the Mobility of Tourists in the Destination” and creating a “Digital Big Data Tourism Platform;

• Low annual budget;
A clear bet on digital tourism projects, in partnership with the “Azores Digital Innovation Hub” project located in the “NONAGON” Technology Park in S. Miguel Island.

02. Implementation of the project “Sentiment Analysis”, monitoring the tourist’s reviews

Implementation of a face-to-face survey on “The Digital Transformation of Azorean Tourist Companies”

03. Implementation of a face-to-face survey on “The Opinion of Azorean Residents on the impacts of tourism in the Azores”

04. Implementation of an online survey on “Sustainable Practices Adopted by Azorean Tourist Companies”
OTA will not only continue its ongoing projects, but also embrace new projects in areas that are fundamental to the sustainability of the Azores tourist destination, namely: fostering the digitalization of the Azorean Tourism companies and Azorean private and public entities; offering guidance on sustainable tourism practices; and monitoring sustainable tourism indicators.

OTA continues to strengthen its partnerships with the various tourism stakeholders of the Azores destination by joining the “Regional Tourism Advisory Board”, including the major local tourism players, a body promoted by the Azores tourism DMO. OTA will also pursue close cooperation with the official Portuguese tourism entities, including “Turismo de Portugal”, as well as with international tourism agencies and the University of the Azores as well as other Universities all over the world;

Finally, OTA will strengthen its partnerships with other Sustainable Tourism Observatories of the INSTO’s network in Portugal and abroad, under a broad participatory process beneficial to all parties involved in a win-win strategy.
Main Conclusions

A smart cooperation approach between Universities and Tourism Observatories brings the following mutual advantages;

On the one hand, Universities play several key roles in a Tourism Observatory, namely:

a) Provide scientific credibility to their production.

b) Support with teams of researchers and the participation of research centers in the projects of the Observatories.

c) Allow joint events to be held.

d) They are credible interlocutors in meetings with governmental tourism entities.
Main Conclusions

On the other hand, Tourism Observatories also make some fundamental contributions to this partnership, namely by:

a) Creating an extension of the scientific production of the Universities.
b) Offering opportunities to university students, not only in terms of contributing to their masters and doctoral thesis, but also in terms of employment.
c) Bringing networking opportunities to Universities, through participation in meetings and activities of International Organizations of which the Observatories are members;
d) Acting like a bridge connecting the scientific production of universities to companies and Destination Management Offices (DMOS);
e) Promoting international meetings and conferences inviting Universities.
f) Providing useful data for research production;
g) Offering to Universities Research Centers new applied research projects and partnerships with researchers and Universities in Portugal and abroad.
YOU CAN COUNT ON US
WE ARE THE FIRST REGIONAL
TOURISM OBSERVATORY IN PORTUGAL
AND
THE FIRST INSTO SUSTAINABLE
TOURISM OBSERVATORY IN PORTUGAL
THANK YOU FOR YOUR ATTENTION