

HALAL TOURISM MARKET IN THE CITY OF PORTO

MERCADO DO TURISMO *HALAL* NA CIDADE DO PORTO

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RESUMO: Tendencialmente, os turistas *halal* procuram destinos turísticos onde existe uma predominância religiosa muçulmana. Contudo, em anos transatos, têm desenvolvido curiosidade em relação a regiões com diferentes estruturas culturais. Além de ser um mercado com uma grande expressividade populacional, é também um dos que mais assegura a circulação de capital. Um dos grandes beneficiários deste movimento tem sido o continente europeu, cuja taxa de visitas de turistas muçulmanos tem observado um aumento gradual. Portugal poderá estabelecer-se como um destino interessante para o

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turista *halal*, pois partilha de um legado cultural deixado pelo povo muçulmano durante a sua ocupação da Península Ibérica.

O presente estudo tem como objetivo compreender se a cidade do Porto reúne as condições necessárias para acolher o turista *halal*. Nessa perspetiva, foram listados um conjunto de serviços e produtos, especialmente relacionados com a alimentação e alojamento, que servem não só a população muçulmana viajante, mas também a população muçulmana local. Pretende-se, ainda, averiguar se os *stakeholders* associados ao setor do turismo têm a consciência dos conceitos “halal” e “turismo halal”, avaliando o interesse da cidade em relação ao segmento estudado. Serão enumeradas as limitações e obstáculos que um viajante muçulmano poderá sentir ao visitar a cidade do Porto. Por forma a assegurar a avaliação dos objetivos propostos, optou-se por uma metodologia qualitativa, utilizando como instrumento de recolha de dados a entrevista semiestruturada. Foram aplicadas dez entrevistas a representantes da comunidade muçulmana local, gestores de unidades hoteleiras, proprietários de restaurantes e ainda agentes de entidades públicas locais.

Apesar de existirem serviços e produtos que satisfazem minimamente os requisitos do turista *halal*, presentemente a cidade do Porto não reúne as condições necessárias para acolher um súbito incremento de procura turística associada à população muçulmana. Torna-se evidente que não há diversidade de oferta ao nível de restaurantes fornecedores de alternativas lícitas de carne. Acresce a inviabilidade para que as unidades hoteleiras apresentem um roteiro de serviços que satisfaça totalmente um cliente islâmico. Se por um lado a falta de procura do cliente muçulmano não motiva financiamento público ou privado aplicado ao segmento halal, por outro, existe a consciência generalizada que a exploração do mercado seria benéfica para a cidade, quer em termos de procura turística, quer ao nível da comunidade local. É visível a postura reativa das *Destination Management Organizations* (DMOS) regional e local, no Porto, assumindo uma posição dependente das motivações e interesses do turista halal.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: Turismo *halal*; Serviços e produtos *halal*; Mercado turístico; Cidade do Porto.

ABSTRACT: Halal tourists tend to look for tourism destinations where there is a Muslim religious predominance, however, in recent years, they have developed curiosity about regions with diverse cultural structures. Beyond being a market with a big demographic

expression, it is also one of the most important ones for the capital circulation. One of the great beneficiaries of this movement has been the European continent, whose rate of Muslim tourist visits has seen a progressive increase. Portugal must establish itself as an interesting destination for the halal tourist, since it shares a cultural legacy left by the Muslim community during the occupation of the Iberian Peninsula.

This study aims to understand if the city of Porto has the necessary conditions to welcome the halal tourist. In that perspective, a set of services and products were listed, especially related to food and accommodation, which serve not only the Muslim traveler population, but also the local Muslim population. It also intends to find out if the stakeholders associated with the tourism sector are aware of the concepts "halal" and "halal tourism", evaluating the interest of the city towards the studied segment. The limitations and obstacles that a Muslim traveler may feel when visiting the city of Porto will also be outlined.

To ensure the evaluation of the proposed objectives, a qualitative methodology was chosen, using as instrument of data collection the semi-structured interview. Ten interviews were applied to representatives of the local Muslim community, hotel managers, restaurant owners and agents from the local public entities. Despite the existence of services and products that minimally meet the requirements of the halal tourist, now the city of Porto is not able to accommodate a sudden increase in tourism demand associated to the Muslim population. It is evident that there is no diversity of supply in terms of restaurants that provide legal meat alternatives. In addition, it is not feasible for the hotel units to present a roadmap of services that fully satisfy an Islamic customer. If on one hand the lack of demand from the Muslim client is not motivating public or private funding applied to the halal segment, on the other hand there is a generalized awareness that the exploration of the market would be beneficial to the city, both in terms of tourism demand and the local community. It is visible the responsive posture of regional and local Destination Management Organizations (DMOS) in Porto, adopting a dependent position on the motivations and interests of the halal tourist.

KEYWORDS: Halal tourism; Halal services and products; Tourism Market; City of Porto.

RÉSUMÉ: Les touristes halal ont souvent tendance à rechercher des destinations touristiques où la religion musulmane est prédominante. Toutefois, ces dernières années, ils ont manifesté une curiosité pour les régions présentant des structures culturelles différentes. En plus d'être un marché où la population est très expressive, c'est aussi l'un des marchés qui assure le plus la circulation des capitaux. L'un des grands bénéficiaires de ce mouvement a été le continent européen, dont le taux de visites de touristes musulmans a connu une augmentation progressive. Sur un plan théorique, le Portugal pourrait s'imposer comme une destination intéressante pour les touristes halal, car il partage un héritage culturel laissé par le peuple musulman lors de son occupation de la péninsule ibérique.

La présente recherche vise à comprendre si la ville de Porto répond aux conditions nécessaires pour accueillir le touriste halal. Dans cette perspective, un ensemble de services et de produits ont été listés, notamment liés à la nourriture et à l'hébergement, qui servent non seulement la population de voyageurs musulmans, mais aussi la population musulmane locale. Elle vise également à déterminer si les acteurs associés au secteur du tourisme connaissent les concepts "halal" et "tourisme halal", en évaluant l'intérêt de la ville pour le segment étudié. Les limitations et les obstacles qu'un voyageur musulman pourrait ressentir en visitant la ville de Porto seront également exposés. Afin d'assurer l'évaluation des objectifs proposés, une méthodologie qualitative a été choisie, utilisant comme instrument de collecte de données une interview semi-structurée. Dix personnes ont été consultées dans le cadre d'entretiens avec des représentants de la communauté musulmane locale, des directeurs d'hôtel, les professionnels de la restauration et également des agents des entités publiques locales.

Bien qu'il existe des services et des produits qui répondent minimalement aux exigences du touriste halal, actuellement la ville de Porto ne réunit pas les conditions nécessaires pour faire face à une augmentation soudaine de la demande touristique liée à la population musulmane. Il est évident qu'il n'existe pas de diversité de l'offre en termes de restaurants proposant des alternatives légales à la viande. En outre, il n'est pas possible pour les unités hôtelières de présenter une feuille de route des services qui satisfasse pleinement un client islamique. Si d'un côté le manque de demande de la part de la population musulmane ne motive pas les financements publics ou privés appliqués au segment halal, d'un autre côté il y a une prise de conscience générale que l'exploration du marché serait bénéfique pour la ville, à la fois en termes de demande touristique et au niveau de la communauté locale. Il est visible la posture réactive des organisations

régionales et locales de gestion des destinations (DMOS) à Porto, assumant une position dépendante des motivations et des intérêts du touriste halal.

MOTS-CLÉS : Tourisme halal ; Produits et services halal ; Marché touristique ; Ville de Porto.

Introduction

The religious devotion of the members of Islam is undeniable by its continuous expansion, and how restricted it is regarding the commandments presented in the holy book, the Koran. This serves as a script, governing the laws by which practitioners tailor their lifestyle around the "permitted" and the "forbidden" under the watchful eye of *Allah*⁴.

Religion was founded with a basic canon, peace, and throughout the holy book, the use of this normative is recurrent, and there are several passages alluding to the concept: "*Allah, you are the original source of peace; from you comes all peace, and to you all peace returns. Therefore, we must live in peace; and allow us to enter paradise: the house of peace. Blessed are you, our Lord, to whom all majesty and honor belong*" (Gharb et al, 2016).

There are mostly two groups of Muslims, the Shiites, and the Sunnis. These groups formed during disputes over leadership succession after the death of the prophet Muhammad in 632 AD. The vast majority of the religion's followers wanted the leadership to be assigned to an individual who was competent to continue the Prophet's teachings and customs, the most suitable designation for such a task being Abu Bakr (Blanchard, 2009). Usually, the general population believes that Islam is only expressed in specific regions, concentrated in the Middle East and North Africa, which is not true at all. The Islamic religion is represented in most regions of the world. It is in the Asian continent where the Muslim religion finds its greatest representation, with about 986 million Muslims. Despite the increase of Muslim inhabitants in the other continents (Masci, 2017), their number is smaller when compared to the Asian continent, but there is a significant expression of Muslims in the Middle East, North Africa, and Sub-Saharan

⁴ Allah (or Allah, from the Arabic al-Ilah), is "the God" or simply "God", unique and merciful, of Islam (Porto Editora. Allah, infopédia inglês - Português [online]. Porto: Porto Editora. Available at <https://www.infopedia.pt/dicionarios/ingles-portugues/Allah>).

Africa, totaling about 564 million. Europe, with a little over 43 million Muslims, presents a significantly lower number when compared to the previous regions, but still of considerable size when compared to the American continent, whose total number of Muslims does not exceed 5 million. Portugal has a small but representative Muslim population, which has been increasing since decolonization in 1974. Statistical data on the Muslim communities living in Portugal show figures between 46.000 and 48.000 Muslims from the former colonies of Mozambique and Guinea Bissau, about 3.500 from Pakistan and 4.000 from Bangladesh. There are also small groups with numbers between 1.000 and 1.500 from Morocco, Algeria, Senegal, and India (Tiesler, 2010). Another important fact to note is the average age of the members belonging to this religion. When compared to the global population, whose average age is around 28 years, the Islamic population is much younger, with an average of only 23 years (Masci, 2017). This is a potential factor of consideration when looking at possible interactions with the Islamic tourist, as there is a tendency for young people to be increasingly informed, and thus more demanding, but it also offers an opportunity because they seek the "new" and the "unknown" (Richards & Morrill, 2020). The Muslim market shows double the growth rate compared to the global market and the volume of money generated and transacted reaches very considerable proportions and noted by the financial literature and international organizations. In 2014 approximately 130 billion US dollars were transacted (Porrás, 2015; Razak et al, 2016) and it was projected that by 2020 approximately 233 billion US dollars would be spent (Islam, 2020) if the global pandemic situation caused by COVID-19 had not occurred.

The *halal tourist*, when compared with the generality of other tourist segments, tends to spend more money during his stay, and recently he has developed an interest in the European continent. Consequently, there are already strategic initiatives for the attraction of these clients by European countries. However, the demands of this tourist imply a very specific attention by the tourism sector. Muslims obey a set of rules imposed by their religion that governs, for example, food, clothing, social behavior, among others. For this reason, a tourism destination that aims the interest of the *halal* segment, needs to envision, and guarantee the supply of adequate services, products, and infrastructures.

The present study aims to understand if the city of Porto has the necessary conditions to welcome the *halal* tourist. In this perspective, a set of services and products were listed, especially related to food and accommodation, which serve not only the Muslim traveler population, but also the local Muslim population. It also intends to

analyze if the *stakeholders* associated to the tourism sector are aware of the concepts "*halal*" and "*halal* tourism", evaluating the potential interest of the city in relation to the studied segment.

The first part analyses relevant literature considering halal tourism and halal tourist's market interest, and the distinctive aspects of the different hotel units in the perspective of halal tourism. It is also mentioned the halal food certificate given by the Halal Institute of Portugal and the Arab influence in the city of Porto. This is followed by the methodological procedures, presentation of the research objectives, as well as the methodological options followed to achieve them and, finally, the results and conclusions.

Literature Review

Probably the most obvious way to identify a member of the Islamic faith is the way they dress. Unlike Western society, the clothing of a practitioner of the Muslim religion follows a set of rules that define what is permissible, but it is no less true that Western fashion is equally confusing from an Islamic perspective. From the Muslim point of view, clothing is comparable to housing and food. While housing is meant to shelter both physical integrity and private life, and food has a restrictive character with purely nutritional and energetic purposes, clothing also includes the same characteristics of protection and modesty and is subject to standards that cannot be neglected. However, if such restrictive dress aspects were in fact a reality, businesses based on these elements would quickly fail (Khan, 2014). The *design of* Muslim clothing serves many other functions: In addition to serving as a symbol of purity and humility, the garment also conveys social status and must be able to distinguish gender in an obvious way (Ibrahim, 2015).

Also, the designs of the Islamic religion imposed on food care are generally rooted in the Muslim culture itself and are thus inseparable from it. Muslims believe that animals were placed on earth by *Allah* for the purpose of being consumed by his faithful followers. Food transcends its basic purpose as a form of sustenance, a basic need, to a sacred act and, therefore, not all animals are considered lawful for consumption. In fact, there is a significant list of forbidden foods, not only in terms of meat⁵, but also vegetables and beverages⁶ (Eddyono, 2010). Regarding meat consumption, it is expressly forbidden to

⁵"He has forbidden you only carrion, and blood, and pork, and anything that has been emulated in the name of other than Allah (Qur'an 2:2173)."

⁶"O humans who believe! Strong drink and gambling, and idols and divine arrows are only blasphemy of Satan's work. Lay aside so that you may succeed (Qur'an 5: 90)"

eat pork and dog meat. Pork, or as described in the Quran, *khinzir*, serves as a catalyst for disease due to its omnivorous nature and the very circumstances where they are captive and breed, which is associated with dirt and impurity. The ban on their consumption stems from various medical testimonies, which demonstrate the number of germs and bacteria these animals carry; more so, the pig is also associated with greed and bad manners. Finally, it is also not allowed to eat meat from predatory animals with claws, fangs, and sharp teeth, animals that kill to subsist - which results in acts contrary to those established by the Koran, as all meat consumed must follow a set of established slaughter rules, animals that it is forbidden to kill, such as ants, bees, woodpeckers, among others, and finally, animals considered repulsive, namely lice, flies, and maggots (Faruk, 2016). As far as foods from the sea are concerned, all kinds of animals are edible, if they are not poisonous or release toxins that are harmful to human health. The same principle applies to plants and vegetables.

Finally, as for drinking liquids, all types of water are allowed if, again, they are not harmful to human health. Spirits are totally forbidden for consumption, regardless of the circumstance. Alcohol is only used in special situations, such as in medicine, cosmetics production, and in light drinks if its production does not result from solutions with mixed alcoholic beverages, which can culminate in alcohol poisoning when consumed (Wahab, 2004).

The Islamic Society of Darwin⁷ (SID), formerly called the Islamic Society of the Northern Territories, with the support of the Department of Multicultural Relations (DRM)⁸ has created a fact sheet summarizing, among other topics, the key elements of Muslim belief (Islamic Society of the Northern Territory, Islam - Culture and Religion, 1994): Belief in one God; Belief in angels; Belief in the books of *Allah*; Belief in prophets; Life after death; Divine will and destiny.

According to Riaz (2005), most of the Muslim community believes unconditionally in the existence of *Allah* and the miraculous deeds described in the Koran, in life after death - paradise being accessible only to those who believe in the prophet Muhammad - and in the existence of the devil (Riaz, 2005). The commitment is so significant that religious conduct becomes intrinsically involved with Muslim culture,

⁷ The Islamic Society of Darwin is a non-profit organization that aims to educate people about the true intent of the Islamic religion and clarify potential misconceptions. It also provides a variable set of services such as integrating new elements of the Muslim religion. It is based in Australia. For more information see <http://isod.org.au/>.

⁸ The goal of DRM is to raise students' awareness of the phenomena of globalization and multiculturalism. DRM coordinates educational, cultural, and social programs that ensure the success of students in socially diverse environments. More information at <https://www.usf.edu/student-affairs/multicultural-affairs>.

exerting influence even on the absolute non-practicing elements of the religion (El-Menouar, 2014).

Although most Muslims believe in the aforementioned key elements as basic normative of the religion, it is worth noting that due to the wide representation of Islamic believers spread across the globe, there are distinctions regarding the meaning of serving God. The most prominent factors are the sociocultural differences and life experiences that characterize the specifics of a given Muslim community (Riaz, 2005). It is consensual in the Muslim universe that the jurisprudence of the holy Koran book and the teachings of *Allah* are subject to the interpretation and cultural context of a given individual, admitting that there are several paths to the same purpose, the worship of God (Riaz, 2005).

The definition of *halal* tourism, being a relatively recent concept, starting to appear in literary works at the beginning of the millennium, has not yet reached a stage of maturity. There are different points of view, from different authors, in which each one adds a different element that, according to them, categorizes in more detail what *halal* tourism is. There are still definitions unable to synthesize conclusively the differences between the characteristics and attributes of *halal tourism* and Islamic tourism. From Butowski's (2018) perspective, the major difference between *halal* and Islamic tourism lies in the tourist's own conduct when traveling. The Islamic tourist should not neglect his religious obligations, scrupulously respecting the dictates of Islamic law (Sharia). In comparison, a *halal* tourist may travel for non-religious reasons and, even though he/she obeys Muslim rules, the religious precepts are not followed as scrupulously. The same author also adds that a non-Muslim tourist whose experience obeys the same prescriptions as a practitioner of the Muslim religion may be considered a *halal* tourist (Butowski, 2018).

In general terms the United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) defines tourism as a social, cultural, and economic phenomenon, which involves the movement of people to places outside their usual place of residence, for a period of less than one year, for pleasure, business, or any other personal reason and which is not subject to an employment relationship with any entity resident in the country or place visited (UNWTO, 2019). *Halal*, as noted above, is a religious concept meaning permitted, legitimate or legal (Miskam et al, 2015). The combination of these two definitions offers an idea about what *halal* tourism means: the suppression of a tourist's needs according to *Sharia* law (Jafari & Scott, 2014). The *World Travel Market (WTM)* argues that *halal*

tourism is a type of religious tourism that focuses on Sharia laws, emphasizing that these must be maintained and respected regardless of the tourist's line of action and the tourism business (WTM, 2007). However, other authors assume that *halal* tourism can go beyond religious limitations if these do not conflict with Sharia laws (Shakiry, 2006). The Committee of Economic and Commercial Cooperation of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (COMCEC) segments the Muslim tourist into three distinct groups, the basic element is the degree of faith and each one should be treated in an appropriate way so that their needs are met: Segment 1 - Absolute practitioners of religion: these are driven by faith, all their decisions, actions and enjoyment depends on prior planning for their entire experience to be considered *halal*, so as to avoid that at no time are they committing any incongruity with respect to the teachings of the Koran. Therefore, they look for destinations perfectly prepared for their reception and hotel sectors where privacy is privileged providing appropriate infrastructures for prayer. The food must be certified by some responsible halal body, or a Muslim management element. Segment 2 - Practitioners of religion: this traveler is comfortable with alternatives, although they prefer destinations and attractions that meet religious needs, especially when it comes to food. This must be considered halal, and no alternatives are accepted when it comes to this topic. Segment 3 - Non-practicing Muslims: The actions of these tourists are not limited by religious impositions. At most they avoid eating pork. According to the COMCEC, most Muslim travelers belong to segment 2, accounting for about 60% of all travelers, and segments 1 and 3 share the remaining percentage with about 20% each. With this idea, and realizing that 80% of travelers accept alternatives, some basic components of greater importance that tourism destinations need to take into consideration are highlighted: *halal* and salah food, or *salaath*⁹, has a significant relevance for Muslim interests, and it is required that all destinations and surrounding infrastructures need to comply in an exquisite way with the provision of conditions for this; bathrooms with responsible use of water; facilities prepared for the Ramadan period; need for *halal* activities; recreational accommodation with special attention to privacy.

Jais (2016) distinguishes between hotel accommodation types from the perspective of a Muslim tourist, dividing into five groups according to their characteristics. Generic hotels: hotels that provide full service, without any religious basis. Their management and operation does not necessarily follow the Sharia

⁹*Salaath*: to pray, to beseech God

requirements; *Muslim Friendly* Hotels: hotels that follow some requirements of the Muslim needs, such as *halal* food, religious amenities, prayer arrows, but in parallel have other types of activities considered illegal for the absolute practitioners of religion, such as nightclubs and alcoholic beverages; "dry" hotels: hotels that do not provide alcoholic beverages; *Muslim Welcome*: hotels that only provide basic elements for the reception of this type of tourists, especially concerning food. Establishments that, despite being generalist, have the minimum conditions to receive Muslim tourists. *Sharia Compliance*: hotels that absolutely fulfill all the needs of a Muslim tourist, according to Sharia law. These establishments have an administrative management focused on the Muslim religion. They establish numerous certificates and trainings to be considered as such (Jais, 2016). A hotel establishment, in order to achieve the level of demand required to accommodate an Islamic tourist, should meet a set of requirements: provision of *halal* food; no night club; art without human or animal figures; services and activities divided by gender; adequate staff to receive the Muslim tourist; prohibition of serving alcoholic beverages; prayer carpets provision; television with only conservative channels; prayer facilities; provision of a copy of the Koran; existence of *Qibla*¹⁰; adequate facilities for Ramadan (Butowski, 2018; Jais, 2016).

Hotels described as *Muslim Friendly* and *Muslim Welcome* are viable, although we can anticipate some difficulty for hotels belonging to the latter category to be able to conveniently position themselves in this market due to their limited reception conditions, which can be a negative factor in the weighting of the stay, losing competitiveness with hotel competitors, or even put a tourist destination at stake if there is no alternative to receive more devout tourists.

The *halal* tourist is divided mainly in two distinct typologies, the leisure tourist - whose profile consists of an increasingly younger age group, traveling in groups (family and/or friends) and stays tending to be longer when compared to other types of tourists - and the business tourist, which traditionally means a shorter stay. To engage these markets in a general way, food will have to be submitted to a *Halal* certification, given by an official entity, which is similar to any other type of food certification and auditing system. Food certification services serve to help consumers make informed decisions about the food they eat. The certification is provided by *Instituto Halal de Portugal* (IHP) and any entity can assess one or more products, free of charge, to be considered legal for

¹⁰ *Meccah's* orienting arrow, where prayers should be directed.

consumption. The quality of the *halal* certification of IHP is guaranteed by the fact that it's based on criteria unanimously accepted by the different schools of Sunni jurisprudence, as well as by the high standards of quality and procedures guaranteed by the inspectors and auditors of IHP. Besides the *halal* training, those inspectors and auditors have also specific training in auditing according to ISO standards and training in quality management. The IHP divides the certification process in five steps: Initial contact and sending the technical sheets: phase of presentation of the company and product(s) in question. Sending all the bureaucratic documents related to the product and service, as well as the application form for certification; Analysis: moment that IHP establishes the decision if the company and the product provided are eligible for certification, and if so, a certification proposal will be sent to the entity in question; Verification of the production process: if the company accepts the certification proposal, a specialized team will be sent to the production site, where it will be analyzed if the production meets the requirements. The team will advise improvements and even eliminate any element that can contaminate the respective products; Client confirmation: acceptance of all criteria presented by IHP, as well as the requirements imposed on its production line; Certification: if there is an agreement between both parties and all documents and production of the article are complying, this same product will be certified for a period of one year.

There is only a small and dispersed community of about 5.000 Muslim inhabitants in the city of Porto, which limits the development of a local commerce dedicated to the Muslim customer. This reality of modest local commerce, combined with the obstacles of a scarce services and products supply provided by private actors representing hotels and restaurants, makes the city of Porto unattractive to this market (Amadeus, 2016). Therefore, *halal* tourism is permanently deprived of the necessary projection for public decision-makers to include it in the Tourism Strategic Plan 2020/2023. If no public investment is foreseen to stimulate the *halal* market in the city it will be extremely risky, from the organizational point of view, for the private sector to assume the costs of an investment dedicated to a market that doesn't present conjecturable results in the short, medium or long term (Nawaz, 2016). For a hotel owner, for example, predictability of return is required to justify the investment during the strategic planning phase of a hotel (Martin & Billaud, 2009). It becomes even more challenging and demanding when applying a business model dedicated to a tourism segment with quite particularities, as is the case of *halal* customers. For this purpose, extraordinary expenses would have to be considered to suppress needs, such as the provision of rooms for exclusively religious

practices or the creation of changing rooms and recreational spaces such as swimming pools and spas divided by gender (COMCEC, 2016).

Methodology

The methodology applied in the empirical data collection was the qualitative methodology. According to Palmer and Bolderston (2006) qualitative research attempts to achieve knowledge of certain social phenomena with the perception of behavioral definitions and attitudes by interpreting the subjective experiences of the participants. Sandelowski (2004) shares a similar opinion, stating that qualitative methodology frames attitudes and strategies to conduct a questionnaire with the objective of discovering how certain individuals perceive, experience, interpret, and produce sociocultural scenarios. It is emphasized then that the qualitative strategy emphasizes the value of the words rather than the quantification of the data collection analyzed (Bryman, 2008). In other words, there is a greater focus on collecting information provided by the social environment, events, or practices that are not standardized, and on analyzing texts and images rather than numbers and statistics (Rahman, 2016). This may prove risky in scientific research. Ryan et al (2009) highlight that an interview is more than just a conversation and considerable knowledge is required to do it in an efficient manner. The nature of the questions, interview techniques, and the interaction between the interviewer and the interviewee are crucial elements to the success of an interview. Still the intellectual and ethical protection of the interviewee is indispensable. Ryan et al (2009) warn that although the data collected from an interview is considered legitimate for a scientific study, it is pertinent to know that there are variables imposed by the interviewer that may misrepresent an interviewee's opinion, diminishing the veracity and transparency of the testimony. It is essential to be aware that the interview must be conducted as clearly as possible, and these variables can be minimized with the help of various techniques and the fluidity of the interview itself. Table 1 shows the interviewed entities, and data from the interviews.

Table 1 - Interviewed entities

Interview no.	Entity	Date	Duration
1	Islamic Cultural Center of Porto (Social Services)	10/03/2021	00:35:56
2	Islamic Cultural Center of Porto (Communication and Social Networking)	18/03/2021	01:14:23
3	“Sabores do Sebouh” Restaurant	14/04/2021	00:43:47
4	Islamic Cultural Center of Porto (Financial Area)	15/04/2021	00:52:07
5	Hotel Premium Porto Maia	03/05/2021	00:35:17

6	Bonfim community (President)	14/05/2021	Written reply
7	Morocco Restaurant	17/05/2021	00:48:54
8	Department of Commerce, Economy, and Tourism of the Porto City Hall	20/05/2021	00:30:01
9	Hotel Mercure	22/05/2021	00:23:39
10	Jase Hotels & Resorts	16/06/2021	00:27:12

Initially several contacts were made with different entities where the purpose of the contact, the topic under study and availability for a meeting were briefly explained, presenting several possible interview formats to the entities in question with the intention of being given some versatility, since conducting a personal interview would be difficult due to the restrictions imposed by the COVID-19 pandemic. The formats proposed were meetings via the Zoom application, by telephone, or, as a last resort, in writing. Contacts were established primarily via e-mail and telephone, and in person. Interviews were conducted via the Zoom platform, by phone, or in person, except for one written response. It was requested and agreed in advance, when applicable, with each of the other interviewees that the conversation would be recorded.

Results

Table 2 exposes the structure of the interview conducted, categorizing the contextualization and evaluation of *halal* tourism.

Table 2 - Integrative Categories of the Interviews

Main Categories	Subcategories
Contextualization of <i>Halal</i> Tourism	Characterization of the <i>halal</i> concept
	Characterization of <i>Halal</i> Tourism
Evaluation of <i>Halal</i> Tourism in the city of Porto	<i>Halal</i> services and products in the city of Porto
	Perception of the potential of the <i>halal</i> segment/niche
	To understand the obstacles/threats to halal tourism in Porto
	Problems and limitations from an organizational point of view
	Identification of future projects
	Evaluation of the products and/or services offered by the interviewed entities
	To understand existing promotion strategies to attract the <i>halal</i> tourist

The interview focused on two main categories, which were consequently mitigated in subcategories. Initially, the contextualization of *halal* tourism was treated, to understand how the interviewee defines the *halal* concept and how he characterizes *halal* tourism and the *halal* tourist. This way, and by the nature of the interview itself, where different

entities from different professional fields were interviewed, it was possible to find out how clearly the "*halal*" terminology is understood in each entity's point of view. In a second phase, more extensive, the interview focuses on the evaluation of *halal* tourism in the city of Porto. The several goals in this phase are to analyze the *halal* services and products offered, searched and promoted by the interviewed entities; to understand the cultural, infrastructural and hospitality added values of the city of Porto from the interviewed entities' point of view; specify the existing and potential barriers that the *halal* tourist may find in the city of Porto and the constraints that entities may face when dealing with the *halal* market; understand the expectations and action plans of the interviewed entities; understand existing marketing strategies in order to attract the *halal* tourist; know the opinion of the interviewed entities about the potential of *halal* tourism as a niche in the tourism market.

The Islamic word *halal* refers to the everyday behaviors permitted by the Muslim religion, from the way of dressing and speaking, hygiene, slaughtering the animal for consumption, usury, and especially food (I1/I2/I4/I6/I7/I9). "The word *halal* means lawful". The literal translation will be 'lawful' or 'permitted', so in the context of what religion is, everything that concerns not only the eating of food, but also the behaviors, the attitudes, all this means *halal*, that is, everything that is permitted is *halal*, for example prostitution is *haram*, it is not *halal*. Practicing usury - a Muslim lending money to another Muslim and charging interest for it - that's *haram*. The concept of *halal* covers a set of cultural behaviors that go beyond the question of food and the question of the very places where one can go and is transversal to all behavior of human beings. That's why the literal concept is 'permitted' or 'lawful', so everything that is permitted or lawful in religion is *halal*, everything that is not permitted or unlawful is *haram*" (I1).

Food is an aspect of special importance in the Muslim religion, and there is a set of rules to be obeyed so that the practitioner of the religion is acting in conformity with his faith at any stage of food processing, from slaughtering to cooking and eating the food (I2/I3/I7).

"(...) when cooking, no alcohol is used, which makes the food taste purer. The very meat that I buy does not have any kind of impurity (...) since the killing of the animal, which is done by the throat without cutting the head, and even in the way of treating the animals alive that must be treated with respect and with dignified living conditions" (I7). "We Muslims have a ritual of killing the animals. It must be with a single blow. The animal cannot suffer, and the blood is drained completely. The animal must be sacrificed in the

name of God, it cannot be like in the Old Testament where animals were sacrificed in the name of a polytheistic pagan god. *Halal* food cannot consist of pork. Blood cannot be consumed" (E2).

Characterization of *Halal* Tourism and *Halal* Tourist

Halal tourism is, in its essence, a religious and cultural tourism (E6). A tourist destination that has interest in exploring the *halal* market must worry about equipping itself with adequate hotel infrastructure to meet the religious needs of the *halal* tourist (I1/I5/I6/I7/I9/I10). "*Halal* tourism is not only composed by a set of infrastructures that are prepared to receive Muslims and that imply, for example, having space in hotels to pray. Let's imagine a paradigmatic case: if I want to pray in a space in a hotel, the hotels are not always prepared for that. The fact that there is a bidet in a hotel bathroom is fundamental for us, because before the prayers we do a purification ritual. So, *halal* tourism, I would say, is the whole set of infrastructures that are prepared to receive Muslims, not only in what concerns the reception, but also the food and the clothing itself; all this implies *halal* tourism" (I1).

The interviewees representing hotel entities recognize the demands imposed by the tourism niche in question. They admit the need for extraordinary conditions to accommodate this type of tourist (I5/I9/I10).

"If we want to attract this kind of tourist, we need to have more extra equipment: have a proper room for them to pray, a specific care with the food, it can't have blood, it can't be an impure food" (I5).

Although a tourist accommodation that has private rooms for Muslim tourists to pray is a competitive advantage, especially when it accommodates large groups of guests (I10), considering less demanding Muslims such convenience may not be a feature of extreme necessity (I4). "For a Muslim, any part of the world can be a mosque. The caricature of the Muslim is to walk with a rug under his arm, because anywhere he can make the *salat*, as it is written in the Koran. A Muslim tourist who comes to the city of Porto, if he doesn't find a mosque, he can take his carpet and can pray in a hotel room, for example" (I2).

It is the opinion of one of the interviewees that the relationship with the *halal* market has not yet been substantial enough to form a concept about *halal* tourism (I8).

"(...) the notion that we have is a very recent notion. First, with the opening of *Emirates* airline flights, it was a very short experience, because then we went into pandemic, so what would be a learning phase and the first contact with the market was something still very tenuous" (I8). The *halal* tourist himself cannot be catalogued similarly to the other

tourists who usually look for sun and sea (I5). The success or failure of a certain destination is closely related to the notion that the Muslim tourist has that when he travels, he will find the necessary conditions to keep and practice his faith, especially in terms of food (E4). An Islamic tourist will only travel to destinations where he can practice his consumerism and where his religious behaviors are not affected (I1). For this reason, it is considered that a *halal tourist* is a demanding tourist, who controls his trip and stay from the first to the last day (I5).

Halal services and products in the city of Porto

The city of Porto does not have much variety when it comes to restaurants (I1/I2/I3/I4/I7), and the few restaurants that exist serve some foods that in their great majority do not have any certification, except for large surfaces such as the kebab of the Ali Baba food chain (E4). There are still few surfaces that offer *halal* food to be prepared by the Muslim himself. In the city of Porto there is a *halal* butcher shop in Cativo Street (I1/I2/I4/I5), some small grocery stores in Loureiro Street and some foods available seasonally in supermarkets (I1/I2/I4). The reason for the scarcity of *halal* food in the city of Porto is related to the small, although expressive, Muslim community of 5.000 residents in the city (I2/I3). Despite this reality, there are food alternatives acceptable by the Muslim religion widely offered in the city of Porto, such as restaurants where fish is served or vegetarian restaurants (I2/I4). "In Lisbon it is easier to find *halal* restaurants because the Muslim community is much bigger; here it is difficult because they are few and very dispersed. It would be much better if there was an area where most Muslims lived, so, at least in that area, *halal* trade would be boosted. I lived in Athens, where there is a goods zone, butchers, fishmongers, general trade like luggage and clothes, barbers, supermarkets, and restaurants" (I3).

Tourist accommodations ensure the provision of their services in a proper way if they are previously warned by travelers or the agency that represents them, as it has happened a few times (I5/I9/I10). Although some hotels are present on the website *halalbooking.com*, an internet page for *online* reservations of exclusive Muslim use, those in charge admit having no idea of their presence on the website, advancing the possibility that it was the hotels' partner tour operators themselves who took the initiative (I5).

There is also the Islamic Cultural Center of Porto, which has as its main objective the religious and social service for the Muslim community living in the city (I1/I2/I4). This institution is also responsible for the two mosques in the city, the main one being in

Heroísmo street and another one, inaugurated in 2018, near “Batalha” square. The Islamic Cultural Center of Porto also serves the purpose of informing tourists, mostly national, about *halal* restaurants and points of interest in the city through the social network *Facebook* (I2) or by distributing flyers with information about different services and activities (I4). They are concerned with providing information in several languages: Portuguese, English, Hindi, and Arabic (I4). In 2019 an air route was established connecting to Dubai by *Emirates* airline (I8).

Perception of the potential of the *halal* segment/niche

Since the Muslim population represents 25% of the world population, it is natural that tourism entities see in a positive perspective the potentiality of the *halal* tourism market increase in the city of Porto (I5), considering that the city of Porto attracts any kind of tourist, regardless of religion or culture (I9). "Since the *boom* in tourist demand for the city of Porto, from 15 years ago, the city is prepared to receive any type of tourist. It is common that groups and certain segments gradually increase their demand in Porto. The visit of a certain segment may initially be spaced out, but over the years this spacing is reduced, with a greater commonness of certain segments that used to be considered niches" (I10).

The interviewed restaurant owners, as expected, share a similar opinion. They are receptive to a tourism increase of the *halal* market because they admit that the only Muslim customers who have meals in their establishments are tourists (I3/I7). The Muslim community living in the city of Porto, in turn, also shares the same perception and would positively accept this tourist movement, since it would boost *halal* commerce in the region, improving the availability of products for its own inhabitants (I1). It is up to hotel and restaurant companies to position themselves according to the needs of a given market to awaken the desire to visit the city of Porto (I6/I8).

"All tourism is interesting for the city, because it generates employment and economic dynamism for the locals. Whether or not it's an interesting niche, depends, mostly, on the entrepreneurs and businessmen who want to take advantage of that niche. Municipalities have all the interest in covering the widest possible range of tourism, but, for example, it is not the municipalities that will open restaurants that use only and exclusively ingredients accepted by the Muslim religion. Nevertheless, it will also depend on national policies and, perhaps, on the Tourism of Portugal, in the promotion of new tourism channels and incentives to explore new audiences" (I6). However, the hotel industry in

the city of Porto adopts a reactive stance towards emerging markets (I9), as it would be premature and risky to mold a strategic positioning of a hotel to a niche that is not even present in the top 15 emerging markets (I5).

"If we look at the *Top-Down* analysis of what tourism is, we won't find the market in our strategic tourism plan, and therefore we would have a lot of difficulty, even because many times the strategic tourism plan serves as funding. Regarding the hotels that open, they must be aligned with the strategic plans. And this is a key point to address. While this type of tourism is not placed in the strategic point of view, it will be difficult to invest with the help of funds so that this type of tourism offer appears in a more substantial way, because otherwise it will never appear in a product structuring logic, in a strategy logic or in an offer that was created with a certain path and with a certain support. The market makes sense, but the answer of the region is 'no', the answer of the city of Porto is 'no' and the answer of the country is 'no' because *halal* tourism is not part of the strategic plan 2020/2023¹¹ " (I8).

Obstacles/threats the *halal* market might face

Up to now, it was already possible to identify some of the difficulties that *halal* tourists will face if they visit Porto: the lack of variety of *halal* products (I1/I2/I3/I4/I7), mainly in food, and the city's own tourist structure that is not prepared to satisfy this market niche (I5/I6/I8/I9/I10).

In fact, only two respondents consider that the city of Porto is perfectly suitable to satisfy the *halal* tourist - curiously both representatives of hotel chains, - justifying that the city of Porto nowadays is prepared to satisfy any type of tourist (I9/I10). Another interviewee partially agrees with this opinion, claiming the existence of minimal conditions (I2), while the vast majority totally disagrees.

The region's infrastructures themselves are not entirely adequate to receive the *halal* tourist. The “Francisco Sá Carneiro” airport, as an example, does not provide more

¹¹ The goals outlined in the Sustainable Tourism Plan 2020/2023 focus mainly on a sustainable development of the tourism sector by implementing renewable resources, qualifying the sector's agents and promoting Portugal as a sustainable destination. Source : <http://www.turismodeportugal.pt/pt/Noticias/Paginas/turismo-de-portugal-apresenta-plano-turismo-sustentavel-20-23.aspx>

intimate spaces for Muslims to pray, or restaurants with *halal* alternatives (I8). The most obvious justification is the lack of travelers with a Muslim cultural background.

"(...) we don't have the capacity to respond, and that is explained by the simple fact that there is no demand that justifies that the units somehow anticipate this market and, therefore, create the market before it appears. Portugal and Porto, when compared to major destinations such as the United Kingdom, France, Spain or even Belgium, where Muslim tourism is quite relevant, are not equipped, because the main issue is the tourism structure that each of these countries have. At their core they have hotel companies that have a worldwide base, and many of them are in the Arab world, which means that they have synergistic capacities and the ability to see this market as complementary" (I8).

Another threat is the fact that *halal* products, already scarce in the city, are not advertised efficiently (I1). The restaurant owners interviewed rely on "word of mouth" advertising (I3/I7), which, while being an undeniably effective form of advertising in certain contexts, may be insufficient when it comes to tourism. But fortunately, we live in a digital age where information is continuously available and easily accessible. With a simple internet search, one can quickly find the few restaurants that serve *halal* food (I3/I7).

Problems and limitations from an organizational point of view

On the possibility of an increase in *halal* food consumption originated by the tourism market, the opinions of the interviewed restaurant owners are disparate, envisioning two scenarios: a more optimistic scenario, where there would be a greater amount of customers that would boost the establishment business (I7), and a perhaps more realistic scenario, where the viability of the business is questioned, claiming that there simply would not be enough food supply to support a sudden increase in *halal* customers (I3).

Although *halal* foods are sold to consumers at a similar price as the others (I1/I2), in the organizational perspective there is a consensus that *halal* products are more expensive because of logistics and scarcity in the regional market (I7/I9/I10). Those businesses that supply these products necessarily have a lower profit margin, or, if they set a price where the profit margin is not affected, they run the risk of not being competitive enough (I7).

"Two years ago, two Israeli restaurants opened, and they weren't viable for a long time because they were too expensive. For a hummus and two falafels they charged €9, while I sell the same thing for €6. As soon as they opened the doors, they closed" (I7). The Morocco restaurant is one of the few absolutely *halal* restaurants in the city of Porto. In fact, as far as we could find out, it is the only restaurant that fully complies with the

Muslim parameters, which, theoretically, could represent a limitation in the business sustainability, since the Muslim community living in Porto does not usually have their meals in restaurants, due to budget limitations, (I4) and also because there is not a large demand in terms of *halal* tourism market (I5/I8/I9/I10). According to the owner of the restaurant Marroco this limitation does not exist, stating that despite having some Muslim customers, most of their customers are the Porto residents themselves, who, out of curiosity, experience a cuisine from a different culture, and who often become regular customers of the restaurant (I7).

"I have a lot of Muslim and non-Muslim clients. There is no prejudice of any kind from the Portuguese people, in fact, there is even curiosity on their part to try Moroccan gastronomy because they know that it is a very typical and rich gastronomy. I have many Muslim tourist clients who find my restaurant. It helps because it is maybe the only absolutely *halal* in the city of Porto, which proves to be an advantage for the restaurant in that sense" (I7). From the hotelier's point of view there is an awareness of the possibility of a Muslim group requesting a private room where they can carry out their activities (I5). Although it is not a limitation for the hotel, it is still an extraordinary concern when compared to other tourists (I9).

"(...) the products are more expensive, and because they are more expensive, we must make a distinction. For example, we have a *buffet* for breakfast, and by having a *buffet* I don't want to have *halal* products mixed with the others, which could make other clients have access. Being more expensive, I don't want them to eat those products; I want Muslims to eat those products, but not other customers. So, this means that I must have my own space, and usually, in hotels, they are meeting rooms where we have a *halal* breakfast for this kind of groups" (I9).

One would imagine then that it would be simpler for a large hotel to meet the needs of the *halal* tourist simply because there are more meeting rooms available - as well as other more private facilities (I5/I8) - but on the other hand in small or medium-sized hotels the treatment with the customer may be more personalized (I10).

The responsible of Commerce, Economy, and Tourism Department of Porto City Hall, highlights another point: the city of Porto is a European wine capital, which means that theoretically it is understood that the *halal* tourist would not be interested in visiting a city in these conditions, for religious reasons of course. However, the interviewee argues that Bordeaux has a tourist structure that captivates the *halal* market, despite being a similar destination to Porto in terms of wine culture (I8).

The interviewees of the Islamic Center of Porto did not raise any potential problem related to *halal* tourism. They only pointed out some difficulties they are facing with social projects proposed to the City Council (I4), such as the supply of land to build a mosque from scratch (I1).

Future projects

So far it is already possible to realize that there is a planned lack of interest by the Porto tourism industry in relation to the *halal* niche market, and, consequently, the entities do not have in their horizon planned projects, to satisfy and attract the *halal tourist* (I5//I9/I10). It was perceived that private sector entities, namely the hotel industry (I8) and restaurants (I6), will have to be at the strategic forefront to promote the interest of this market, and if there is interest from both parties, the public sector will respond accordingly with financial aid (I8). Until then, the hospitality industry will keep an eye on market movements, adopting a reactive stance, and if interest is incited, the hospitality industry will respond accordingly (I5).

Motivated by the content of the interviews, the entity representing Porto City Hall expressed interest in creating dynamics to increase relations with the Islamic Cultural Center of Porto (I8).

"From the tourism point of view, and I can tell you that I was for two years president of Porto Tourism Association (ATP) and currently I'm still vice president of ATP, we in the so-called *Porto Convention Bureau*, I don't remember there being any kind of contact [with the Islamic Cultural Center of Porto], and it would be useful. I will even make a note of that because I think it makes sense that there is a contact so that there is some knowledge. Even from the point of view of helping each other and working this type of tourist" (I8). In the same line, also the Islamic Cultural Center of Porto admits being interested in creating other kind of informative platforms with the purpose of instructing tourists and residents about *halal* services and products in the city of Porto, establishing its presence in other social networks (I2), and in the creation of newsletters to be made available in several languages in the mosques (I4).

Products and/or services offered by the interviewed entities

So far some of the services provided to the community and to *halal* tourists that may visit the city were described. Briefly, the entities responsible for the Islamic Cultural Center

of Porto and mosques concentrate most of their efforts in the resident and newly immigrated community, helping in social issues, such as gathering the necessary documentation to obtain the residence permit (I4), financial help and supply of appliances (I1), help in the reception of refugees (I1/I2), among others. Tourists attending masses are treated equally as a resident. The mosque was not created for tourists, it was created for Muslims, regardless of their origin. They recognize that sometimes there are tourists who come to the mosque, especially on Fridays, to perform their *salat* and they take the opportunity and seek information about restaurants or points of interest in the city with the person in charge of the mosque and the Islamic Cultural Center of Porto (I4).

The tourist accommodations, although not fully prepared to receive this type of tourist, because they do not distinguish between markets (I9), are receptive to personalized requests if a Muslim group contact them before the trip. Despite the little variety of *halal* products available (I5), hotel managers recognize that they can quickly get *halal* food (I10). "(...) we have already had a group from Dubai and the hotel director was easily able to meet expectations because we had a previous conversation with the guide to try to understand what the needs were and we met them; (...) we had to buy different ingredients to cook a certain type of food, we looked for a specific supplier, probably the butcher [Cativo's] that we have here in Porto. Being able to meet these needs, it is a niche market that any unit is interested in" (I5).

About public entities, it is safe to say that the product that is sold is the city itself, and as already mentioned, the service provided by the city is dependent on the interest of the private sector (I6/I7).

Finally, the interviewed, owners of the two restaurants under analysis, stated that they provide *halal* food. One of the restaurants is absolutely *halal*, where it is safe to consume any kind of food (I7), while the other, although not fully *halal*, provides some *halal* products that are stored, cooked, and served according to Muslim rules (I3).

Promotion Strategies

There are no promotion strategies implemented by the tourist accommodations, at least proactively, directed exclusively to the *halal* tourist. There are communication projects for the general market, where digital marketing strategies are executed to attract clients, not discriminating their origin (I9). These entities were initially contacted due to their presence on the website *halalboking.com*, where they themselves admitted that they were unaware that they were represented on the platform (I5), as previously mentioned,

justifying that there are protocols with different entities and tour operators that intercede for the hotel and are responsible for communication (I10).

The owners of the restaurants assume that the digital communication of their business occurs in a passive way and depends on the tourist's research results (I3/I7). These results are sometimes transformed into cross-border contacts by Muslim customers who seek to understand what *halal* food provided by the restaurant to better plan their trip (I3). The Islamic Cultural Center of Porto uses mainly the social network *Facebook* to publish information about the mosques and, in general, to share clarifications about the national conjuncture (I2). Table 3 summarizes and synthesizes the results of the interviews:

Table 3 - Interview Results

Themes	Conclusions	Interviewees
Halal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Cultural and religious pillar that dictates what is lawful in the daily life of a Muslim. - It presupposes unique dietary rules. - It integrates rules that regulate the slaughter of the animal for human consumption. - It denies the practice of usury. - A concept little known in Portuguese society. 	11/12/14/15/16/17 12/13/19/110 12/13 11 15/18/110
Halal Tourism	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Tourism with a religious content. - It implies infrastructures prepared to receive a Muslim tourist. - A market still very little explored in the city of Porto. 	16 11/18 18
Halal Tourist	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - He travels in a way that does not hurt the rules of his religion. - You can pray anywhere. - It accepts alternatives to <i>halal</i> foods such as fish and vegetarian food. - They don't travel only for religious reasons; - They are clients with greater buying power. - He is a demanding customer; - He contacts a hotel in advance to be properly accommodated. 	11/12/16 12/14 12/13/14 12/14 15 15/19/110 15/110
Halal Products and Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Several restaurants with alternative foods such as fish and vegetarian food. - Two perfectly adequate mosques; - The Islamic Cultural Center of Porto provides information about the city. - Air route with <i>Emirates airline</i>. - <i>Halal</i> butchery. - Some grocery stores with <i>halal</i> products. - <i>Halal</i> product available seasonally in large stores. - Existence of "<i>muslim friendly</i>" hotels that are easily prepared to accommodate the tourist. 	11/12/14/15 11/14 12/14 14/18 11/13/14/15 12 11/12/13/14/15/19/110
Potential of the Halal Segment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Benefit the local Muslim community. - Boosting the local commerce of certain restaurants and other businesses; - Large global population expressivity. - Tourist with greater economic capacity. 	11/13/16/17 15 110
Obstacles/ Threats	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Not enough restaurants with <i>halal</i> meat options. - Lack of hotels formatted to fully satisfy the <i>halal</i> customer. - Little local commerce that sells <i>halal</i> products. - Airport with no prayer spaces or <i>halal</i> food availability; - Wine culture of the city. - Small and scattered Muslim community residing in the city; - Hotel business deals little with the <i>halal</i> customer. - <i>Halal</i> market is not part of the Tourism Strategic Plan 2020/2023. - Lack of demand. 	11/12/13/14/17 11/17 13/14 18 18 12 15/110 18 15
Organization Issues	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Little help from public entities. - Limited variety of <i>halal</i> food products. - Difficulty in smaller hotels in providing meeting rooms. - Lack of public funding. - Difficulty in larger hotels in customizing customer requests. 	11/12 13 15/18 18 110

Future Projects	- Building an Islamic cemetery.	I1
	- Building a mosque from scratch.	I1/I2
	- Strengthen passive communication on booking platforms.	I5
	- Greater presence on social networks to promote the product.	I7
	- Establish a partnership with the Islamic Center of Porto.	I8
Evaluation of Products/ Services Provided	- Constant maintenance and promotion of the two mosques.	I1/I2/I4
	- Dissemination of information about the mosques in a fast and effective way.	I2
	- Financial and social aid to the Muslim community living in the city.	I1/I4
	- Provision of some <i>halal</i> prepared dishes.	I3
	- Provision of fully <i>halal</i> food.	I7
- Hospitality capable of meeting the requests of <i>halal</i> groups.	I5/I9/I10	
Promotion Strategies	- Social Media.	I2/I7
	- <i>Google Adwords</i> .	I3/I7
	- Presence on booking platforms for Muslim customers.	I5/I9

As far as public entities are concerned, no promotion strategies are applied so far (I6).

Conclusions

The fact that there is little literature in Portugal related to the theme "*halal* tourism" resulted, during the literature collection phase, in an added difficulty in trying to measure the potential of the *halal* market and the benefits it could bring to Portuguese tourism and the city of Porto. The purpose of this study was to analyze the point of view of tourism actors in the city of Porto regarding the perception of the potential of the *halal* market and to investigate whether the city meets the needs of Muslim clients. The preliminary character of this study offers a detailed insight into the specificities of the studied market, evaluating its natural limitations imposed by religious conditions. This article structures in an exemplary way the existing limitations in the city of Porto, determining the causalities that may eventually be conditioning factors for the development of opportunities capable of qualifying the city as a potential tourism destination. These opportunities will necessarily have to be studied in future works but can take the present study as a starting point, considering the empirical work done useful and fruitful so that future scientific questions can be answered in an easier way since primary data regarding the theme will be available. The selection of the interviewees was made to complement different points of view of representatives from different areas, thus making it interesting to see to what extent the opinions and ideas about culture and *halal* tourism converge or differ (Neves, 2009). The respondents represent the hotel and restaurant industry, public entities and the Muslim culture living in the city, since the responsible for the Islamic Cultural Center of Porto also contributed with their testimony. The interview was designed to understand, from the interviewees' point of view, the definition of *halal*, the potential of *halal* tourism market,

what kind of services and products are available to the Muslim tourist, if there is a strategic interest to attract the Islamic tourist and the capacity of Porto to receive this client.

Almost all the interviewees are aware that Muslims have well-rooted customs related to religion, with the aim of regulating and distinguishing the licit from the illicit, particularly in relation to their diet. There is a consensus that the Muslim needs a very particular diet, where some foods and alcoholic beverages are expressly forbidden. Also, the hotel managers and restaurant owners interviewed, know that the cooking of meals require an extraordinary set of rules. The Muslim representatives went a bit further in describing the word "*halal*", mentioning the prohibition of practices that might express usury and eccentricity. They claim that it is a little-known concept in Portugal: two of the three hotel managers admitted to doing previous research on the subject to feel more comfortable during the interview. Considering the particularities of the Muslim, the unanimous opinion of the interviewees is the need for the existence of infrastructures capable of welcoming this type of tourist, even because, according to one of the speakers, the type of tourism exercised by this market is primarily of a religious nature, something very little explored in the city. The Muslim representatives counter-argue, reiterating that Muslims do not travel for exclusively religious reasons, highlighting the national tourists themselves who travel simply to get to know the city. They admit, however, that during their trip and stay at a given destination, all their actions must conform to religious rules and at no time can they be constrained. Muslim representatives defend the versatility of the Muslim tourist, mentioning that although they must perform their *salat* assiduously, it can be done anywhere and anytime. Further, the religious practice provides for food alternatives such as fish and vegetarian food (Faruk, 2016).

In the several interviews were listed the services and/or products provided by institutions and establishments to *halal* clients, or in the case of Muslim representatives, which services they use in the city of Porto. They affirm that there aren't many options of restaurants that offer *halal* alternatives in the menu, much less establishments that are absolutely *halal*, however there are some restaurants that make viable options like fish or vegetarian food. As for the available services there are two mosques perfectly adequate and prepared to welcome the *halal* tourist, managed by the responsible of the Islamic Cultural Center of Porto, providing information in several languages - including English, Arabic and Hindi - about the city, points of interest and suggestions about restaurants with *halal* products. On the other hand, the hotel owners explain that the hotels they represent, despite not being structured to satisfy Islamic tourists, can easily prepare themselves to welcome

the client. This is because, as a rule, the hotels themselves are contacted in advance by Islamic tourists to provide them with information about the capacity of the accommodation and the services that may be available to them. Also noteworthy is the existence, since 2019 of an air route between Dubai and Porto, at the Francisco Sá Carneiro airport.

There is agreement on the beneficial effect that this segment could bring to the city, although the benefit is motivated by different reasons. The interviewees responsible for the local Muslim community understand that if there is an increment of Muslim population, even if traveling, and a public and economic interest on the segment, there would be a boost of local commerce, restaurants and other small businesses supplying *halal* products. Restaurant owners share the same opinion. The interviewed hotel managers are receptive to this tourist market because there is a large representation of Muslim people worldwide and, as a rule, it is recognized by the high financial capacity.

The city of Porto presents a set of obstacles that could potentially be critical for the success of the city as a destination and may even become uncompetitive compared to other European destinations, when it comes to the *halal* segment. The few numbers of *halal* restaurants can be a challenge. The limited variety of establishments that provide *halal* products forces the Muslim tourist to do meticulous research to find a suitable place, a problem that is further intensified due to the scarcity of restaurants that present a *halal* certificate, proving that their food complies with Islamic law (Rahim et al, 2020). Hospitality deals little with *halal* customers, meaning there will always be a learning phase, which may potentiate errors in the process of legitimizing products (Ivanova, 2016) to an acceptance of licit consumption in the Islamic point of view. Besides, the hotels, although they are previously prepared to receive the Muslim tourist, don't have as a basic strategy the supply of an exclusively *halal* service, which is justifiable, once the challenge is the calculation of a necessary and inherent investment to receive this kind of tourist that can be translated obligatorily in a return of positive incomes (Nawaz, 2016). At the present time, such a strategy is risky because of the lack of demand of this market, thus constituting a potential threat for the treatment and progression of the *halal* segment in the city.

Finally, the municipality highlights the limitations of the city's public infrastructures to meet the needs of a Muslim traveler, namely the absence of spaces to pray, and *halal* food options, visible even in the case of the Francisco Sá Carneiro airport. Another consideration is the wine culture of the city itself, which may conflict with the religious and cultural beliefs of the *halal* tourist.

There are other factors inherent to the organizations managed by the interviewees that result in additional difficulties. In the case of the Islamic Cultural Center of Porto, several projects were several times unviable by public entities, namely the municipality. The local Muslim community presented a plan for the construction of an official mosque and an Islamic cemetery, projects of great importance, fundamental for the Islamic culture in the city, already including funding for its construction, requiring only a piece of land made available by the City Council. The municipality's difficulty in making land available resulted in the rejection of these requests more than once. The organizational characteristics intrinsic to the hotel business also demonstrate limitations. In the view of the hotel representatives interviewed, two scenarios are considered: larger hotels have an easier time providing meeting rooms for exclusive Muslim use but have greater difficulty in accessing personalized requests from *halal* clients, while smaller hotels have a more direct and familiar treatment with the client, but in contrast a greater difficulty in providing rooms for the exclusive use of one type of tourist. Another limitation detected in the hotel industry is the way of exposure to the *halal* market. As already mentioned, there are dozens of hotels available in the *halalbooking.com* website, including two of the three hotels considered in the interview. Coincidentally, these hotels' managers were unaware of the representativeness of their hotel on the site, admitting that such presence may have been the initiative of intermediary partners. Concluding, managers do not communicate their product in a personalized and conscious way to maximize the interest of the *halal* market.

Through the empirical process developed to answer questions related to the evaluation of the capacity of the city of Porto as an attractive destination for a type of segment with very particular characteristics such as *halal*, it was possible, through the information provided by the representatives of the public and private sectors, to build a demonstrative definition of the perception of the *halal* market by the various stakeholders. The sensitive areas that could inhibit their interest in the market were identified.

The data collected allow us to understand that there is a correct concept of *halal* culture, of what it represents and demands. Thus, there is a consensus that the treatment of the *halal* tourist implies special and exclusive considerations only to the sector. There is also a generalized idea that the city of Porto, despite the current existence - although limited - of services and products that fulfill the basic needs of a Muslim, is not adequate to support an increase of Islamic population, either local or visiting. The collected elements also expose some benefits that the *halal* market could offer to the city of Porto, but, on the other

hand, the stakeholders do not show an action plan to reverse the current limitations, in order to raise the segment interest.

The empirical study highlights that the limitations of the tourism offer result from the little interest of the *stakeholders* associated to the tourism sector of the city of Porto regarding the *halal* market, with a standoff between public and private entities. The public entities delegate to the private sector the competence of fostering the interest of the market, through the increase of restaurants and hotels that provide *halal* services; on the contrary, the private sector points out the lack of public financing so that the investors feel comfortable enough to take a risk position. Universally, however, it is denoted the adoption of a reactive posture, waiting for the market movement and contradicting Dwyer (2013) when he states that, nowadays, the success or failure of a tourism destination depends a lot on the ability to predict behaviors of an extremely volatile market and a proactive reaction by the tourism sector.

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