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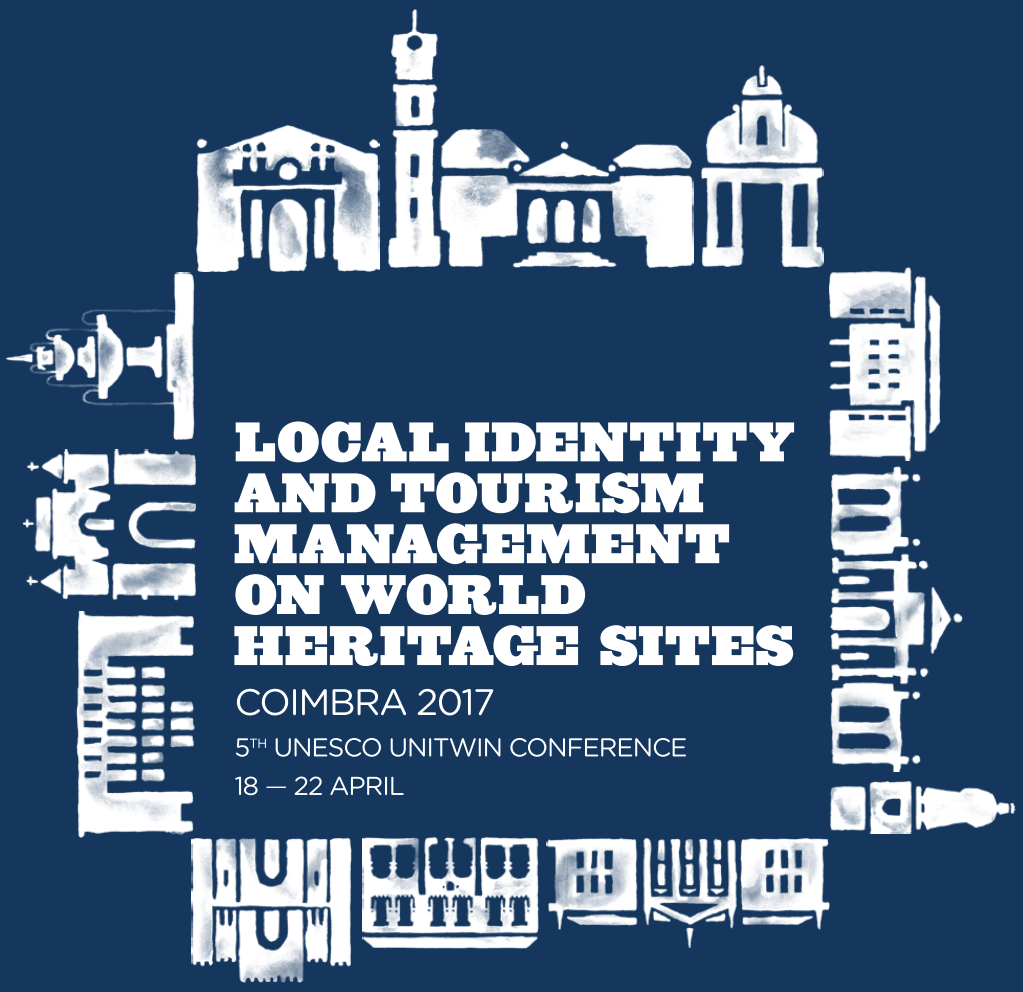

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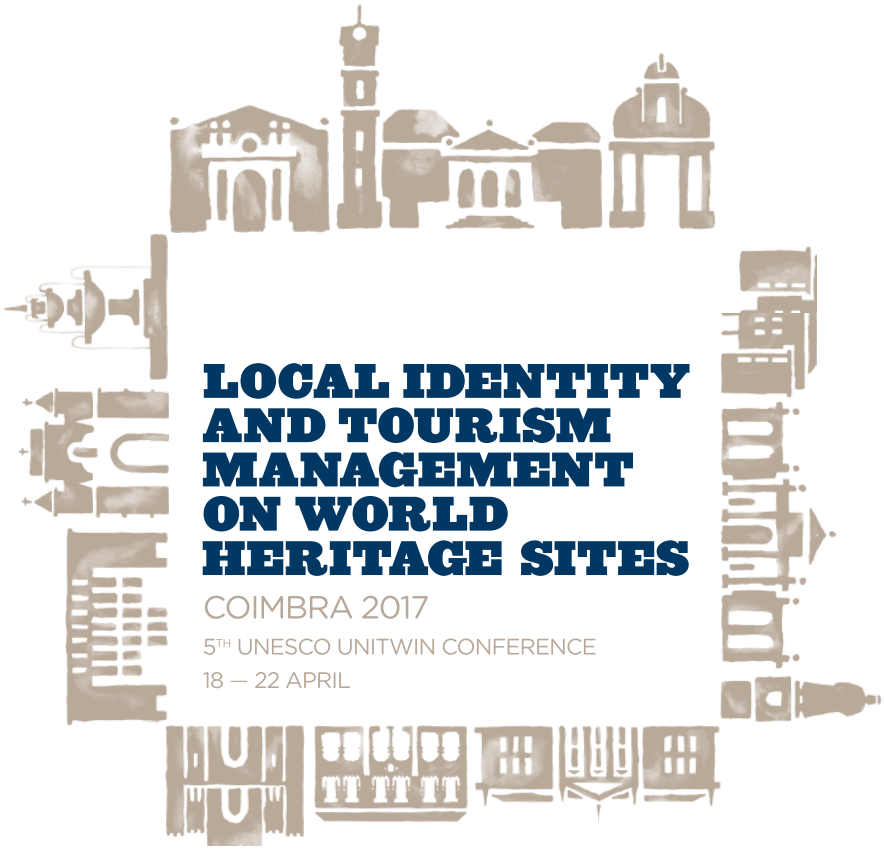

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Mafra and Saramago. Strategies of mediation between a potential World Heritage Site and a Nobel Prize winner's literary masterpiece

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Abstract

The growth of cultural and heritage tourism in the last decades, while offering attractive opportunities of territorial promotion and development, poses significant challenges in terms of destination management. This is especially true when the uniqueness of Word Heritage Sites is considered, given UNESCO's fundamental aim of preserving the still visible traces of mankind's manifold history. The added layers provided by literary texts as discourses shaping the expectations of visitors, however, should not be disregarded in this process, given the possibilities offered to counter or expand simplified views of places and identities. Integrated in a research project dedicated to the investigation of existing fractures in the promotion and experience of cultural destinations, a study was conducted in Mafra, Portugal, considering both the potential of the Royal Complex (former Franciscan Monastery, Basilica, National Palace and Hunting Grounds) for future integration in the World Heritage Site list and the importance of the novel *Baltasar and Blimunda*, by Nobel Prize winner José Saramago, for the development of tourism in the region. A major fracture was detected between the literary text and the discursive reality of the heritage site, affecting fundamental aspects related to its promotion and experience. However, the contrasting stance provided by the novel was also seen as offering prospects for a richer and more profound understanding of the destination. Mediation strategies capable of allowing an adequate promotion and experience of the site are therefore proposed, namely taking into consideration the opportunities offered by new digital technologies.

Keywords

Cultural and heritage tourism; literary tourism; mediation strategies; Mafra's National Palace; José Saramago.

1. Introduction

The General Conference of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), at its 17th session, in Paris, in November 1972, adopted the *Convention concerning the protection of the world cultural and natural heritage* (UNESCO, 1972). Aiming at an unbiased representation of the world's regions and cultures, UNESCO "seeks to encourage the identification, protection and preservation of cultural and natural heritage around the world considered to be of outstanding value to humanity" (UNESCO, n.d.). In terms of cultural heritage, "monuments" are defined as "architectural works, works of monumental sculpture and painting,

elements or structures of an archaeological nature, inscriptions, cave dwellings and combinations of features, which are of outstanding universal value from the point of view of history, art or science" (UNESCO, 1972, art. 1). Since its adoption, the World Heritage List has been unanimously accepted as ''the most effective international legal instrument for the protection of cultural and natural heritage'' (Strasser, 2002: 215).

Sites must be evaluated by the Advisory Bodies to the World Heritage Committee according to ten criteria, detailed in the Operational Guidelines for the Implementation of the World Heritage Convention (UNESCO, 2005). The first six criteria refer to cultural sites and are connected with three fundamental aspects: uniqueness, historical authenticity and integrity or intactness. In 2017, a candidacy was announced for the integration of Mafra's Royal Complex (former Franciscan Monastery, Basilica, National Palace and Hunting Grounds) in the World Heritage Site list, coinciding with the 300th anniversary of the laying of the first stone. In addition to arguments related to the consideration of the site as a "masterpiece of human creative genius" (criterion 1), the architectural expression of a political power (Royal Absolutism) and of its relation with a religion (Roman Catholicism) with a clear impact "in architecture or technology, monumental arts, town-planning or landscape design" (criterion 2), the complex is also associated with "literary works of outstanding universal significance" (criterion 6), given its close association with the most famous novel by Nobel Prize winner José Saramago, *Baltasar and Blimunda*, whose title in Portuguese, *Memorial do Convento*, directly refers to the architectural complex.

As a subsector of cultural and heritage tourism, literary tourism, in fact, has come to be seen as a privileged way not only of promoting destinations (Hoppen et al., 2014; Robinson and Andersen, 2002), by attracting both general heritage visitors and genuine literary tourists (Smith, 2003), but also of providing a different perspective into local cultures and sites, allowing a more complex and profound experience (Cohen-Hattab and Kerber, 2004). The relation between literature and the tangible and intangible heritage of destinations, however, cannot simply be taken for granted, requiring an informed and balanced mediation, given the inevitable fractures between the knowledge and expectations of visitors and the cultural reality of destinations (Giaccardi, 2012; Harrison, 2010; Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, 1998; Labadi and Long, 2010; Waterton and Watson, 2015). Integrated in a research project dedicated to the investigation of existing fractures in the promotion and experience of cultural sites, a study was carried out in Mafra in order to ascertain existing inconsistencies and to allow the development of adequate mediation proposals, considering the potential of the Royal Complex for future integration in the World Heritage list and the importance of Saramago's novel for the development of tourism in the region – as well as the opportunities offered by new digital technologies given their non-invasiveness, innovation potential and the possibility of articulating the tangible and intangible dimensions in a single, appealing, dynamic and interactive discourse capable of incorporating Saramago's work. This paper aims to present the principal findings of the study and the main recommendations proposed.

2. Theoretical framework and background

2.1. Cultural and heritage tourism

Extensive research has been conducted on general heritage issues (Howard, 2003; Messenger and Smith, 2010; Peacock and Rizzo, 2008), and on the UNESCO World Heritage

programme in particular (Bourdeau et al., 2015; Harrison and Hitchcock, 2005; Leask and Fyall, 2011), analysing the impact of the inclusion of sites in the World Heritage List. Even though most studies tend to focus on specific cases (e.g. Cuccia et al., 2016), the consequences of the classification of listed sites, especially with respect to tourism, have also been examined (Bonet, 2003; Cochrane and Tapper, 2006), with researchers generally signalling a positive relationship between listed heritage sites and tourism growth. Nevertheless, some authors, such as Bruno Frey and Lasse Steiner, while also recognizing "strong positive effects induced by the World Heritage List, in particular by drawing attention to prominent examples of our heritage, and by providing protection and conservation to specific objects" (2013: 184), also warn about potential negative effects caused by excessive tourism growth. Although assumed as inevitable, the relationship between tourism and heritage is, in fact, widely seen as combining both opportunities and threats (Benton, 2010; Boniface and Fowler, 1993; Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, 1998; Nuryanti, 1996; Timothy and Boyd, 2003; Waterton and Watson, 2015; West, 2010). The motivation to attract wider audiences must be balanced with the risks deriving from mass tourism (Messenger & Smith, 2010), its impact on site conservation (Nuryanti, 1996) and the preservation of cultural diversity (Harrison, 2010). Fundamental for an adequate management of heritage sites is, therefore, an awareness of existing discrepancies between the knowledge and expectations of visitors, informing their cognitive and emotional experience, and the cultural reality of the destination (Giaccardi, 2012; Harrison, 2010; Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, 1998; Labadi and Long, 2010; Waterton and Watson, 2015) – as well as the fact that tourism inevitably reshapes heritage discourses, for its fundamental nature "is dynamic, and its interaction with heritage often results in a reinterpretation of heritage" (Nuryanti, 1996, p. 250). Because creating a risk of inauthenticity (MacCannell, 1999; Timothy and Boyd, 2003), tourism inevitably requires a curatorship capable of balancing what is considered to be an accurate presentation of heritage with the goals of tourism development (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, 1998). Sites can never be presented in "raw" and must be prepared for audiences through musealization processes: museographic display, textual information and communication strategies must be used as compensating factors for the gap between "reality" and the synthesis of its representation (Hede and Thyne, 2010; Olick et al., 2011), considering, in the process, the discourses that shape the expectations of visitors.

2.2. Literary tourism

Accompanying the growth of cultural and heritage tourism in the past decades (UNWTO, 2015), literary tourism, by attracting both general heritage visitors and true literary pilgrims (Smith, 2003), has increasingly been seen as a privileged way of promoting destinations and providing a different window into places and cultures (Hendrix, 2014; Hoppen et al., 2014; Robinson and Andersen, 2002). The Operational Guidelines for the Implementation of the World Heritage Convention (UNESCO, 2005), in fact, contemplate the inclusion of sites "directly or tangibly associated with events or living traditions, with ideas, or with beliefs, with artistic and literary works of outstanding universal significance" (criterion 6). The importance attributed to literature by UNESCO is also evident in its Cities of Literature initiative, part of the Creative Cities network launched in 2004. Academic interest in the intersections between literature and tourism has also increased since the pioneer works of Ousby (1985) and Butler (1986), revealing a growing interest in the capacity of literature to recuperate and reconstruct memories associated with represented spaces and its potential for the constitution and valorisation of

tourism destinations (Baleiro e Quinteiro, 2014; Butler, 2005; Cunha, 2006; Hoppen et al., 2014). Joyce's Dublin or Kafka's Prague – two of UNESCO's Cities of Literature – can thus be seen as examples of the use of literature not only to promote but also to allow differentiated experiences, helping establish a more authentic link with local cultures. Considering Butler's (1986) original typology, later extended by Busby and Klug (2001), places of significance in literary works may become pivotal points of cultural visits, helping provide different perspectives into local cultures and sites – such as Mafra and the Royal Complex in Saramago's novel, a unique case of a conversion of a place into a literary destination as a metonymical effect of a work's focus on an architectural monument. Perhaps more importantly, literary texts can be seen as helping counter or diversify simplified views of places and identities, providing tourists with more complex ways of interpreting the character and cultural identity of destinations, allowing a more multifaceted and profound experience (Cohen-Hattab and Kerber, 2004). In this process, the potential of storytelling for the promotion and experience of destinations should also not be disregarded (Muniz et al., 2015; Woodside, 2010; Woodside & Martin, 2015; Woodside and Megehee, 2009), especially given the opportunities for engaging visitors in an original, lively yet informative manner based on stories and episodes associated with literary texts (Oliveira et al., 2016b).

2.3. Heritage interpretation and digital humanities

One of the main functions of heritage management is the interpretation of sites, presenting their historical background, relating them to formal descriptions and decoding their intangible meanings and values. Heritage interpretation (including the associated concepts of presentation, interpretive infrastructure and of site interpreter) was described in the ICOMOS Ename Charter (2007) as "the full range of potential activities intended to heighten public awareness and enhance understanding of a cultural heritage site" (p. 4). Interpretation is considered a major aspect of the visitor's experience and is one of the key issues for tourism studies (Drummond and Yeoman, 2011; Fyall et al., 2003; Grimwade and Carter, 2000; Howard, 2011; Nuryanti, 1996; Millar, 1989; Poria et al., 2009; Uzzell, 1989). It has also been considered a crucial strategy for heritage sustainability (Bramwell, & Lane, 2005; Hall and McArthur, 1993; Kuo, 2002; Moscardo, 2003; Shackley, 2011), with some author's focusing on the visitor-consumer (Poria et al., 2009; Rojas and Camarero, 2008) and others on the perspective of the supplier (Hall and McArthur, 1993; Kuo, 2002; Moscardo, 2003; Pashkevich, 2016). Moscardo (1996: 376), recognising interpretation as "the key to ensuring the quality of the tourism experience", established that traditional static exhibits cause low interest and low satisfaction, while dynamic and interactive exhibits, with multisensory media (audio-visual presentations, models, displays), generate high interest and high satisfaction, promoting more learning and greater understanding (p. 383). Mindfulness, which is "the ability of an individual to actively process information surrounding them with the aim of using that information to draw distinctive or novel conclusions" (Dutt and Ninov, 2016: 81) is related to personal memories and experiences (Moscardo 1996, 2009). Also maintaining that the perception of authenticity is subjective, Timothy (2007) recognizes two types of education available in heritage sites: formal, similar to educational programmes; and informal, referring to the multileveled information and the diversity of strategies offered by sites, individually adaptable to the visitors and their perception of authenticity.

Digital humanities, by "bringing together the traditional tools of humanistic thinking (interpretation and critique, historical perspective, comparative cultural and social analysis, contextualization, archival research) with the tools of computational thinking (information design, statistical analysis, geographic information systems, database creation, and computer graphics) to formulate, interpret, and analyse a humanities-based research problem" (Burdick et al., 2016: 134), are capable of giving an adequate response to the needs of the interpretative model for heritage sites. Despite the vast literature about possible applications of digital humanities (Berry, 2012; Gold and Klein, 2016; Schreibman et al., 2016; Warwick et al., 2012), the research on digital projects for museums and heritage sites is still very incipient, consisting mainly of case studies: such as the Chess project, about storytelling and personalised interactive stories for visitors of cultural sites (Katifori et al., 2014); or the projects lead by Kenderdine, related to immersive and interactive visualization environments (IIVE) (Kenderdine, 2016). In addition to the opportunities created for new models of data dissemination, digital humanities challenge heritage sites to find a balance between the material exhibition and storytelling, virtual object manipulation and augmented reality.

2.4. Mafra and Saramago

Distancing about 40 km from Lisbon, the town of Mafra can be said to owe its renown to the Royal Complex – under whose shadow it grew, as the locals usually say – and to José Saramago's novel *Baltasar and Blimunda*, one of the reasons for the great increase in the number of visitors to the Palace in the past decades, namely after the author was awarded the Nobel Prize and the text became required reading in Portuguese secondary schools. With 301 461 visitors in 2015, according to official information provided by the Palace, the "Royal Building", as it was called at the time of its construction, is the largest Baroque monument in Portugal, an architectonic complex built in the 18th century comprising a monastery, a basilica and the palace, former seasonal residence of the kings of Portugal. Its construction was ordered by João V (1689-1750) as the fulfilment of a vow to the Franciscan order after the birth of his first child, Maria Bárbara – who would later become Queen consort of Spain –, and the project was commissioned to German architect Johann Friedrich Ludwig. The laying of the first stone took place in 1717 and the basilica was consecrated in 1730, although the works were only officially concluded in 1735. With the notable exception of the "Lioz" limestone used in its construction, brought from nearby quarries, most other materials and decorative elements were imported from Europe, including 58 statues in Carrara marble sculpted in Italy, the most significant collection of Italian Baroque sculpture outside that country. The basilica where they are displayed occupies the central part of the façade, signalling the union of the royal and the sacred spaces of the building and the concept of an absolute, divinized power. Six pipe organs, commissioned at the end of the eighteenth century, can there be found and two carillons are housed in the north and south towers. The library is considered one of the most significant Enlightenment libraries in Europe: with around 36 000 volumes, it occupies the largest and most admired room in the building. At a given point, around 50 000 people were involved in the construction of the complex, a clear demonstration of the power of a king who wished to emulate the splendour of the absolutist reign of Louis XIV and who, at the time, was one of the wealthiest in Europe.

Standing in front of the complex one day, Saramago is said to have exclaimed that he would like to "put it" in a novel (Saramago, 1998). The result was *Baltasar and Blimunda – Memorial do Convento*, in Portuguese – a work translated into more than fifty languages and presently in

its 54th edition in Portugal. Adapted to the theatre and inspiring the opera *Blimunda*, by Italian composer Azio Corghi, it tells the love story of Baltasar, a soldier who is abandoned by his army after losing his left hand in the War of the Spanish Succession, and Blimunda, a young woman with the supernatural capacity of seeing inside people. With the 18th century construction of Mafra's Royal Complex as background and the presence of historical figures such as João V, the novel constitutes a compelling, ironic comment on the uses of power, especially given the author's intention of writing a novel about a past seen from the perspective of the present (Saramago, 1998). In literary terms, the work can be considered a postmodernist historical text (Arnaut, 2002; 2008), a great example of the historiographic metafiction of the period, of works that "install and then blur the line between fiction and history" (Hutcheon, 1988: 113), a strategy that inevitably leads to a distancing of the novel from traditional discourses about the site.

3. Methodology

Integrated in a project dedicated to the investigation of existing fractures in the promotion and experience of cultural destinations (Oliveira et al., 2016a), a multi-method research (Robson and McCartan, 2016) was designed considering the adaptation to the area of cultural tourism, presented in Figure 1, of Parasuraman, Zeithaml, and Berry's (1985) original gap model of service quality developed in the scope of the project:

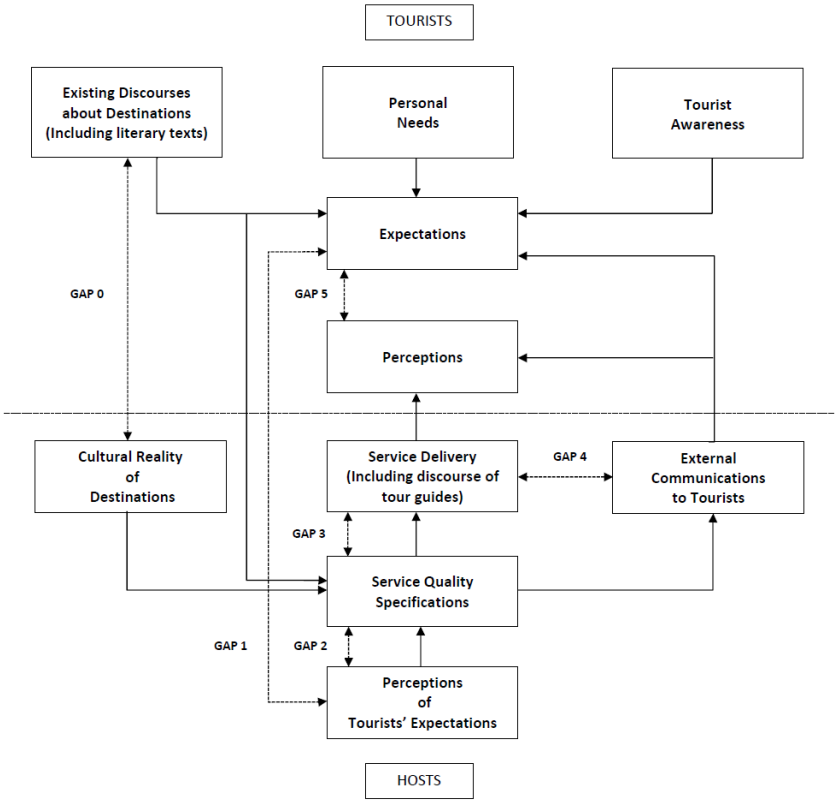

Figure 1 - Conceptual Gap Model of Service Quality in Cultural Tourism.
Source: Adapted from Parasuraman, Zeithaml, and Berry, 1985

Apart from the general adaptation to the area of cultural tourism, the main differences regarding the original model reside in the inclusion of an additional dimension – "Cultural Reality

of Destinations", the anchor of authenticity of the present model – and a new, resulting gap – Gap 0 – established with "Existing Discourses about Destinations", which includes not only word-of-mouth and e-WoM communications but also literary and non-literary texts or discourses influencing the expectations of visitors. In fact, concerns related to site conservation and the preservation of cultural diversity, not only in World Heritage sites but also in cultural destinations in general, as well as the desire for authenticity expressed by cultural tourists, turn the inclusion of that additional dimension into an essential requirement, especially given the emphasis of the original model on quality as perceived by consumers.

Considering the identified gaps, the study comprised: a critical analysis of the novel; documental analyses of sources about the monument; in-depth semi-structured interviews; participant observation activities; assessment of external communications; a netnographic analysis of commentaries of visitors to the Palace. A questionnaire was developed but, unfortunately, no formal answer was received from the administration of the Palace regarding the possibility of conducting the intended survey, a situation that, given the protracted time period involved, may, in fact, infringe existing legislation. Interviews (Berg, 2001) were conducted with the Director of the Educational Services of the Palace, who supervise the activity of official tour guides; with three guides of Tempo Cardinal, a private company that provides official services offered by the Palace; and with an independent tour guide. Participant observation (Schensul et al., 1999) was conducted during visits to Mafra's city centre and Palace and included the stage play *Memorial do Convento*, an adaptation of Saramago's novel by Filomena Oliveira and Miguel Real, coproduced by the Palace and *Éter*, an external cultural producer, and three guided tours of the monument: one with the independent tour guide and two with different guides of Tempo Cardinal. All visits and interviews took place between February and June of 2016, with the assessment of the websites of the National Palace and local Municipality preceding the visits. The netnographic analysis of online comments (Bowler, 2010; Kozinets, 2015) considered 243 commentaries (147 in Portuguese, 64 in English, 19 in French and 13 in Spanish) posted by visitors on the TripAdvisor website between September 2015 and October 2016.

For the interpretation of the results, qualitative discourse analysis (Phillips and Hardy, 2002) was used considering the dimensions implied in the different gaps of the model (e.g. for Gap 1, expectations of tourists and the host's perceptions of those expectations). Bearing in mind that discourse analysis follows "interpretive, context-sensitive, often historical methodologies to analyse discourses empirically, [namely] to discover how ideologies permeate and manifest in these discourses" (Heracleous, 2004, p. 187), the collected data was independently interpreted by the different members of the research group and the results were later discussed so as to arrive at the main conclusions. The analysis of online comments by visitors used Keller's (1993) brand equity model as a frame of reference to determine the brand image of the Palace and ascertain positive and negative features of the site from the visitors' perspective.

4. Results and discussion

As some initial, circumscribed results were previously presented at international conferences and published in the respective proceedings (Oliveira et al., 2016a, 2016b), a summary of the findings will be presented, albeit now confronting the different dimensions

involved in each gap of the proposed model. These represent, therefore, the main, global findings of the study.

4.1. *Gap 0*

Considering the new gap introduced in the model with the inclusion of the dimension related to the cultural reality of destinations, a major fracture was detected between the literary work and the discursive reality of the heritage site. The documental analysis of sources about the Royal Complex revealed a limited number of texts on which discourses about the site are based (Pimentel, 1992), namely: *Relação da Magnífica Obra de Mafra* [*Description of the Magnificent Monument of Mafra*], a manuscript datable from 1733-1735; *Principio e Fundação do Real Convento de Mafra, e sua Grandeza, e sua Sustentação, e Luxo* [*Foundation of the Royal Convent of Mafra*] (also known as *Livro das Pitanças*; see also Gorjão, 2015), a codex datable from around 1763-1770; *Monumento Sacro* [*Sacred Monument*], published in 1751 and written by Friar João de S. José do Prado, Master of Ceremonies of the Basilica; *Gabinete Histórico* [*Historical Study*], written by Friar Cláudio da Conceição and published in 1820, with its eighth tome dedicated to Mafra; and *O Monumento de Mafra: Descripção Minuciosa d'este Edifício* [*The Monument of Mafra: Comprehensive Description of the Building*] , written by Joaquim da Conceição Gomes and published in 1866. These documental sources about the Palace still follow the models of the Enlightenment, focusing on the event of its construction and on the role of the king who orders it, João V, revealing apologetic manipulations of historical information and the narration of supernatural events, such as the "miraculous" conception of the royal heir. In them, the king is portrayed as a hero, the protagonist, a providential agent who is exalted and idealized, to the detriment of the people, of the workers who built the Palace, whose lives remain in the shadows.

Following his intention of writing a novel about the past from the standpoint of the present (Saramago, 1998), Saramago's approach will not favour the royal family or the ruling classes but, instead, focus on the set of social, economic and cultural circumstances that characterized the period in which the Palace was constructed. A clear contrast is created between the king and queen and the central couple of the novel, Baltasar and Blimunda. As members of the people, they will suffer the deprivations and adversities imposed upon the general population, such the indiscriminate condemnation of men and women to the fires of the Inquisition, where Baltasar ultimately meets his end. Although revealing a profound knowledge of the period in question and of documental sources about the site, the novel distances itself from traditional historical discourses by favouring the perspective of common men and women, thus establishing an intrinsic conflict with the powers behind the very existence of the monument – the Royal family and the Catholic church of the time – and the discursive tradition associated with the site. Although some historical incongruences and deliberate manipulations can be detected in the novel, namely due to the temporal and ideological perspectives adopted – such as the reference to the Basilica as a "mere copy" –, this gap constitutes a fundamental fracture that can be seen as affecting several aspects related to the promotion and experience of the destination.

4.2. Gaps 1 and 2

The interview with the Director of the Educational Services of the Palace allowed the ascertainment of aspects related to both the perception of visitor's expectations and specifications of service quality. The main services offered by the Palace are guided tours and visits to the museological space, but, in terms of studies conducted to ascertain visitor's

expectations and perceptions, the Director affirmed that none had yet been done. Although her indication of the Library as one of the main reasons for visiting the site – "above all, the Library" – is consistent with the results of the netnographic analysis (see 4.5), management perception of expectations is fundamentally based on informal feedbacks: "Many times, when I receive a call from a teacher who visited us, I try to know… But the answers are not registered and it should be properly done"; "We know that the quality of our guided tour based on Saramago's novel is great […] but we would like to know if it motivated visitors to come back with their families". Sometimes the feedback may come in the form of complaints related to Saramago's views, signalling the gap between the literary text and the discursive reality of the site: "We have to be very careful: we are dealing with an author who has a very concrete political orientation: he is anticlerical and a member of the Communist party". The gap, in fact, is taken into account for service delivery specifications. Saying that Saramago "defends the people who work and ridicules the king", the Director affirmed that some visitors "do not clearly understand" the conflict and that some precautions had to be made: "less favourable references to the Church", for example, "are done outside the Basilica". Summarizing her view, the Director stated that: "Our discourse doesn't have to be his. What we have to do is to clarify everything. We do not have to adopt his perspective". Although, in terms of service structure, the Educational Services are responsible for the training and supervision of the official tour guides, there is no pre-established script, only the indication of "fundamental aspects" to be included in the visits, especially because "each has his or her own way of capturing the audience; otherwise it becomes repetitive, tiresome". In terms of supervision, guided tours are sometimes accompanied by members of the Educational Services, including the Director herself, who indicated that the guides who conduct the visits based on Saramago's novel "are able to adapt" to different audiences, "interacting with them", establishing a profound "connection with the work, with concrete chapters". Mentioning shortcomings in terms of the museological space – "we have restrictions" – and activities that might diversify the offer and improve overall service quality – such as visits "every Thursday or Friday evening" –, the Director indicated financial and staff limitations – "we do not have enough guards, the technicians are also guards" – and the "growing bureaucracy" as the main obstacles to desired improvements.

4.3. *Gap 3*

In terms of service delivery, the quality of the guided tours based on Saramago's text mentioned by the Director of the Educational Services was confirmed during the participant observation activities. The contrast with the tour of the independent guide was clear: after a morning visit to the nearby village of Cheleiros, where one of the main episodes of the novel takes place, the afternoon tour of the Palace did not include any reference to Saramago's work. The two visits to the Palace conducted by the official guides of Tempo Cardinal, on the other hand, were clearly organized around a deliberate mediation between the official discourse of history and Saramago's novel. Instead of dismissed, inconsistencies were, in fact, highlighted, asserting the legitimacy of the differing perspectives. Explaining that Saramago would sometimes omit or distort information to fit his purposes, the guide indicated that working conditions, for example, may, indeed, have been dreadful at the time, but there was an infirmary and doctors available on the construction site to treat injured workers. A constant attention to the reaction of participants was also evident in both visits, which acquired a slightly different character given the different publics involved: a more conservative group in the first visit, a more

liberal one in the second, actually prompting a balanced defence of the opposing perspectives by the tour guides. The presentation of relevant, precise information about the Palace, its historical context and Saramago's novel was also an element common to both tours, and proved to be a highly convincing and effective mediation strategy, entirely convergent with the use of the text as a means of promoting and experiencing the heritage site. Humour and even irony were used, made possible by references to the literary work and the author's style. In fact, the narration of episodes from the novel, the discourse of history and folk tradition – such as episodes from the king's life, or the local legend of a woman on whom Blimunda's character may have been based – enlivened the visits and helped create a deeper involvement of the public with the visited space, allowing a more profound and personal experience of the site by making the visitor's "feel" the space in a more personal way while simultaneously establishing a common ground between the conflicting perspectives.

The limitations mentioned by the Director of the Educational Services in regard to the museological space, however, also became clear during the visits. Considering the fundamental importance attributed to heritage interpretation, the lack of information detected in the museological space can be said to seriously limit the understanding of the site: room panels with sparing textual information offer only general indications based on the original functions of the rooms (e.g. "Throne room") and few details about some of the objects on display. The analogical exhibition (see Montpetit, 1996) clearly intends to recreate historical settings in several areas of the Palace, producing a credible narrative about the ceremonial, residential and religious functions of the building. While the exhibition infrastructure provides a non-personal interpretation, tour guides assume the task of providing a personal interpretation of the site (Brochu and Merriman, 2002). References to Saramago's novel are restricted to the non-permanent discourse of the guides and other educational initiatives, such as the stage play. Permanent museography and the available textual information are exclusively related to the history and occupants of the Palace, without any allusions to the fictional text, although the historic references made by Saramago in his novel could easily be included throughout the exhibition. A non-guided visit to the Palace, in fact, would not allow for an adequate interpretation of the visited space, or a meaningful connection with its history, or the establishment of any contextual links with the Nobel Prize winner's work (also due to the lack of technological means to assist the interpretation of the site, including audio-guides).

In fact, and although the quality of the stage play *Memorial do Convento*, an adaptation of Saramago's novel by Filomena Oliveira and Miguel Real, coproduced by the Palace and an external cultural producer, "Éter – Produções Culturais", was acknowledged by all participants, it cannot be said to compensate for the lack of contextual information about Saramago's work in the museological exhibition, as there is no direct articulation with the space of the Palace, its value, from a tourism standpoint, stemming from the general atmosphere created by the enactment of selected episodes from the novel.

4.4. Gap 4

According to the Director of the Educational Services, the three main channels for external communications are the institutional website, the Facebook page and email listings. Only the websites of the Palace and of the Municipality were analysed before the participant observation activities, but no reference was found to José Saramago's novel in either site apart from the

name and description of the thematic, guided tour chosen by the participants. Considering the importance attributed to the novel for the remarkable growth in the number of visitors to the area and the awareness of the fundamental gap between the literary text and the discursive tradition associated with the heritage site, it is surprising that these channels are not used to promote the destination and adequately influence the expectations and perceptions of visitors. A visit to the city centre and to the local Tourism Office later confirmed the initial impression of an almost absolute lack of information or references regarding Saramago's novel and its relation to Mafra, the only noticeable element being a billboard announcing the stage play on a sidewall of the Palace complex.

4.5. *Gap 5*

In terms of the expectations and perceptions of visitors, the netnographic analysis of commentaries posted in TripAdvisor developed in the scope of the project (Faria, 2017) to determine the brand associations of the Palace (Keller, 1993) allowed the ascertainment of positive and negative features of the heritage site from the visitors' perspective. Even though the Basilica is the object of many favourable comments – "beautiful", "with beautiful Italian sculptures of saints", "hearing the carillons is an unforgettable experience" –, the main attraction is indeed the Library – "it alone is worth the visit"; "one of the most beautiful in the world" –, in spite of the limitations mentioned in several commentaries – "unfortunately, one cannot visit the entire library, only the entrance". Many, in fact, reflect mixed feelings, with the constant use of adversatives in sentences such as "I liked it, but…": "it is a very rich building and full of history, however, I was slightly disappointed because most of the Palace is closed to the public and you can only walk three meters into the library". The building itself is the object of several strong, favourable remarks – "an imposing, historical Palace"; "one of the most beautiful and emblematic buildings in Portugal"; "with almost 300 years, the Royal Monument of Mafra is a universal heritage". The exhibition itself, however, deserves varied comments, with adjectives ranging from "fantastic" to "poor". Also the employees receive mixed comments, with several visitors highlighting the "antipathy" of some personnel. Although the guided tours receive positive remarks – "very interesting, and allows you to learn the most important aspects about the Palace" –, the impossibility of booking one on the same day and the lack of technological means to assist the interpretation of the site are singled out as flaws, the same happening with the sparing textual information available in the rooms of the Palace – "there is little information about the space and the history of the space". Some visitors actually make improvement suggestions, saying, for example, that with the use of audio-visual equipment the visits could be "more intense". In terms of the favourability of the associations, however, the positive aspects exceed the negative. The manifest connotation of the Palace with the 18th-century history of Portugal is greatly appreciated and emphasised in several commentaries – "to visit the history of this grandiose monument is to go back in time" –, the same happening with the specific aspects that distinguish it from similar sites, such as its age, the Library, the Basilica with its six pipe organs and the association of the building with José Saramago's novel *Baltasar and Blimunda*, object of strong and favourable comments – "I couldn't help remembering Saramago, the importance of his work is evident"; "visiting the Palace becomes a much more important experience after reading the novel". Even though the brand associations of Mafra's National Palace tend to be strong and favourable, a comparison between the positive elements of the associations – Library, Basilica, Building, History of Portugal, Saramago – and the negative

– exhibition, poor information, flaws in service, lack of technology – reveals that much can be done in terms of service to bridge this particular gap – especially regarding heritage interpretation and Saramago's novel – to take full advantage of the intrinsic merits of the site and provide visitors with a more rewarding and culturally enriching experience.

Conclusions and recommendations

The sustainable management of heritage sites necessarily implies the implementation of strategies of mediation between the need to protect existing heritage and the advantages offered by tourism development (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, 1998), strategies in which the interpretation and promotion of the destinations and innovative and creative ways of structuring and qualifying the offer play a fundamental role (Bramwell, & Lane, 2005; Hall and McArthur, 1993; Kuo, 2002; Moscardo, 2003; Shackley, 2011). Although the architectural complex in Mafra can easily be seen as fulfilling several criteria for inclusion in the World Heritage List related to aspects such as uniqueness, historical authenticity and integrity, its association with the novel *Baltasar and Blimunda*, by Nobel Prize winner José Saramago, should not be disregarded in this process – not only for providing an additional criterion for its consideration as a potential candidate but, more importantly, given its relevance for a richer, differentiated experience of the site.

As an additional element of tourism development, the use of a literary work to promote a heritage site inherently requires an informed and balanced mediation, given the existence of inevitable gaps between the text as a discourse shaping the expectations of visitors and the cultural reality of the visited space. In fact, the study of existing fractures in the promotion and experience of Mafra's National Palace revealed a fundamental gap between Saramago's text and the discursive reality of the destination, a gap that can be seen as affecting several aspects of service structure. As observed in the interview with the Director of the Educational Services, the ideological component of the novel can have a negative impact in terms of service delivery specifications, forcing the limitation of its use during visits to certain areas of the complex. Although a causal relationship could not be clearly established, the lack of references or information about Saramago's novel in the websites of both the Palace and the Municipality, as well as in the local Tourism Office, also seems to indicate a certain discomfort with its use as a way of promoting the destination, especially when we consider the importance attributed to *Baltasar and Blimunda* for the remarkable growth in the number of visitors to the Palace and the area's newfound renown. These visitors, however, dedicate strong, favourable comments to both the author and the work in the online reviews analysed, indicating the potential of the literary text for the promotion and experience of the heritage site. In fact, far from an obstacle, the contrasting stance offered by the novel proved to be highly productive in the discourse of the official tour guides (Oliveira, 2016b), offering opportunities for engaging the public in an original, lively yet informative manner that also respected the site's legacy. For the internal provision of information to visitors and in external communications directed at its promotion based on Saramago's novel, four main discursive strategies detected in the guides' discourse should, in fact, be considered to allow for a richer, coherent and more profound experience of the destination: a) The highlighting – instead of the dismissal – of inconsistencies, asserting the legitimacy of the differing perspectives; b) The presentation and intersection of relevant, detailed information about the visited space, its historical context and the novel; c) Storytelling, namely the narration of episodes from the novel, the discourse of history and folk tradition; d)

The use of humour. Due to a certain discomfort with the perceived image of the author as a communist activist, however, it is recommended that communication strategies allowing a differentiated experience of the destination be based more on the novel than on the writer, namely on its main characters, Baltasar and Blimunda.

Although, as with many other heritage sites, the National Palace of Mafra faces financial constraints that may limit the implementation of desirable improvements, as suggested by the Director of the Educational Services, proposals capable of allowing an adequate promotion and experience of the location based on Saramago's novel are presented below, considering two different but complementary areas of intervention: museological information and external communications.

Considering that the number of physical panels and labels in classified monuments – elements which could provide the necessary information about the exhibition, the visited space and its context, including the novel – must be limited so as not to become intrusive, information and communication technologies should be used both for heritage interpretation and for interaction with real or virtual audiences. Based on the experience of ongoing digital projects, the creation of interactive labels and panels, with wireless web-based tools, textual and visual graphics, describing and analysing the formal and functional aspects of the objects on display, as well as their intangible meanings, should be considered. The creation of interactive displays operating on the personal devices of visitors, as tested in the QRator project, would enable "the public to collaborate and discuss object interpretation with museum curators and academic researchers" and allows visitors "to create a digital 'living' label that other visitors can read and respond to" (Ross, 2012: 38). Factors such as accessibility, usefulness and participation are also increasingly required by museum visitors. Commonly associated with 3D, augmented reality is a virtual reality with specific parameters, mixing computer-simulated images, videos, sound, textual data, graphics, or GPS in a real environment (Hassan, & Ramkissoon, 2017: 118). Augmented reality offers a great variety of options for heritage interpretation, without physical impact on space, and "may bridge the gaps between heritage offerings of a museum and visitor expectations" (Hassan, & Ramkissoon, 2017: 124). This remains, however, a very sophisticated and expensive technology, developed in experimental and transdisciplinary projects.

In regard to the institutional website of the Palace, it is a static collection of pages with identical layouts: header with scrolling images; a navigation top bar, complemented by a side navigation list; main field with fixed textual contents, without hyperlinks, sometimes with labelled images, without zoom. Interactivity is limited to the navigation menus and the same information is presented to all users. As with the museological exhibition, the information on the website is reductive rather than expansive. Upgrading to a more dynamic, interactive model that would allow the viewer to configure his own profile and to adapt the available information to his interests and expectations is recommended, especially as interactivity and the customization of formats and contents, in real time, enhance the level of learning and enjoyment and promotes the visitors' experience and involvement at the heritage site (Roque, 2015). By allowing the use of great amounts of data about the location and correlated discourses and representations, digital technologies could facilitate the construction of a meta-discourse based on Saramago's novel, establishing connections with physical spaces and historical resources. The Palace should also use its digital presence on the Internet to foster a dialogue with its visitors and other stakeholders. Facebook posts should not go unanswered and must be

often updated. In the same vein, comments posted on sites like TripAdvisor must be monitored constantly to avoid the risk of becoming drivers of misleading information in a context where the power of peer-to-peer recommendation is undeniable.

A consistent communications policy and related strategies should be developed in order to align the promotion and experience of the heritage site considering the Palace's mission and the attributes of its brand image, namely Saramago's novel. This should be conveyed to different target audiences using the means presented in Table 1:

Table 1 - Recommendations for External Communications.

Targets	Schools	Tourists	Media	Potential sponsors	Local community	Tourism entities
Electronic newsletter		Dbase				
Press releases			x			
Press conferences			x			
Printed ads: flyers	x				x	
Outdoors	x	x		x	x	x
ATM advertisement		x			x	
Didactic cards and games	x					
Store	x				x	x
Facebook page	x	X	x	x	x	x
Institutional website	x	X	x	x	x	x
Blog	x	X				
Instagram	x	X			x	x
Personal meetings				x		x

Finally, in a logic of complementarity and harmonization of efforts, and in order to strengthen and develop the relation between the site and Saramago's novel, partnerships should be established between the Palace, the Municipality, tourism entities, public or private organizations promoting literary tours and the José Saramago Foundation.

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