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## **The Impacts of Rip Curl Pro, Surf Competition, in Peniche (Portugal)**

### **Abstract**

Deeply connected to the sea, its greatest resource, Peniche, from its early development has become over the years one of the main references in nautical tourism, with surf being its main sport practice. In fact, nowadays, surf is the main source of income of the municipality. The popularity of this destination as a standard for nautical sports has gained such a dimension that has attracted the attention of one of the world's leading nautical sports events, the Rip Curl Pro. Since 2009 (the first time this event took place in that city) to the present day, the impacts of this event have not been only felt in the Western region but also throughout the country.

**Key words:** Rip Curl Pro, nautical Tourism, coastal tourism, surf, Peniche, impacts.

### **1. Introduction**

Portugal is a country that reveals strong potential in nautical tourism, due to characteristics such as a long coast, temperate climate, geographical position in the world, its (perceived) heartwarming reception / hospitality and the fact that it is rated on the top of the world safest countries [9]. These facts became essential to activate a set of favourable features that incite the raise of the tourism sector as an economic developer in this country.

Regarding the Rip Curl Pro stage, the municipality and its town of Peniche, has a long history associated with the sea. It is bordered to the west by the Atlantic Ocean, and an insular part formed by the small Berlengas archipelago, a major tourist attraction in this region (for leisure swimming and bird watching tourism).

Peniche's geographical location (around 100 km north from Lisbon and where the main Portuguese airport is located), its temperate climate, coupled with the exceptional nature of its waves, as well as its good road connections (including the existence of a seaside highway named *Surf Highway*), allows an easy access to this city. Indeed, it favors its natural potentialities, attracting in turn a greater number of visitors, who can stimulate the tourism development through the nautical and cultural segments.

The Rip Curl Pro Peniche, competition performed in the beach of Supertubos, is one of the stages or phases of the main world surfing circuit championship. Being one of the biggest surf world events and having the participation of the best surfers, it consequently brings greater visibility to the regions where the event is carried out. Under this context, this paper brings the analysis of the impacts that an event as Rip Curl Pro can have on a small city as Peniche and on the region where it is located. The research included consultations of bibliography, the report of the Rip Curl Pro Peniche 2015 [10] analyses and the application of an interview with the city mayor, an important stakeholder for the transformation of Peniche into an international benchmark in surfing.

## 2. Background

The Industrial Revolution, between the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, altered profoundly the concept of tourism. Since the 1960s, tourism has been distinguished as the fundamental factor in the economy of the western countries, and currently represents 10% of the employment in Portugal [22]. According to the World Tourism Organization (WTO), the number of international tourist arrivals will reach approximately 1.6 billion in 2020, 2.5 times the volume recorded in the late 1990s [7]. This growth in the tourism sector, predicted to occur within 2030, is due to four fundamental factors, the following being among them: the concentration of populations around urban centres; the increasing length of leisure time; the increase in purchasing power and the development of means of transport [5].

Tourism is considered a sector that encompasses and stimulates several spheres, namely the social, political, economic and environmental ones, accounting for 6% of all exports of goods and services and 30% of the total world exports of services [8]. Therefore, the socio-economic framework of Portugal and Europe has triggered a need, on the part of companies and individuals, to demonstrate their greatest qualities and make them profitable. It is in this context that tourism events arise as a form of promotion and requalification of a particular region or country, these being among the main commitments of PENT (National Strategic Plan for Tourism) and the Portuguese Government. In fact, the effort between the government and the entity Tourism of Portugal has been notorious. In general terms PENT has sought to boost and diversify

the tourism offer in order to attract a greater number and diversity of tourists, as well as to mitigate seasonality (one of the biggest problems of tourism in Portugal). In this way, the practice of sustainable tourism can counteract seasonality and monetize resources in a lasting way as in the case of surf, since primary resources are used (waves) without compromising its renewal.

The sustainability of a territory is an element that has deserved special attention in recent decades. According to the World Tourism Organization, the definition of sustainable tourism can be summarized in a few key points. Those include the development of an economic model that improves the quality of life of businesses and local people, enhances the quality of service provided to the visitor, as well as a model that achieves an equitable relation between expenditure and benefits and, finally, which improves and requalifies social infrastructures as well as health care [14]. The poor management of a territory can lead to its self-destruction, which is why strategic and sustainable planning are essential to avoid environmental degradation, prevent economic failure and minimize negative social-cultural impacts.

In Portugal, nautical tourism is a sector that still reveals some weaknesses because it has not yet been proficiently organized and developed. It is pointed out that only 1.2% of tourists visit the country for nautical purposes and their contribution to the increase of Portuguese wealth only represents 0.07% of the gross internal product [21]. However, although nautical / coastal tourism in Portugal is still predominantly seasonal, revealing its greater flow between May and October, a strong commitment with this sector can contribute to the increase of the Portuguese Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and to enhance the competitiveness of Portugal [17]. In this field of nautical tourism, PENT has focused on advertising through the media with the aim to expand the visibility of tourist destinations, as well as of various nautical-sports activities associated with them, which will consequently attract a larger and more diversified number of visitors. In this regard, it also seeks to develop and organize a range of quality goods and services, such as various types of maritime activities, restaurants, commercial areas and, finally, the promotion of the product in large media events [20].

In the past decades, Portugal witnessed a financial crisis and a high unemployment rate. One of the solutions introduced to overcome this tendency was the creation and development of innovative sectors such as the activities related to nautical tourism [16] [19], surf being its main focus. Given that, this sport has proved to be an excellent engine for economic development (Figure 1) and environmental sustainability [6].



*Figure 1 - Surf as a development promotor during economic crisis*

*Source: [6]*

Thus, this modality will attract new national and international public and private investments, that will contribute to the economic, political, social, cultural and environmental development of Portugal.

There are currently around 50,000 to 70,000 surfers who regularly surf in Portugal at least once a week, with a verified growth of this number having been 25% to 30% per year. In this respect, surfers can contribute to the increment of profit of surf-camps hotels, restaurants and bars, among others. Undeniably, in Portugal, surfing and the products related to this sport represent around 30 to 40 million euros per year. Although the surf related activities still are a tourism niche, a great growth in Portugal and all over the world has been recorded in this respect. An example of this is the fact that the mentioned activity is responsible in Portugal for 1,000 to 2,000 direct jobs [1].

### **3. Surf and Rip Curl Pro in Peniche**

The history of surfing in the region of Peniche dates back to 1964 where the first foreign surfers appeared on Baleal beach [18]. Until the year 1970, the most popular places to practice this sport had been the beaches of Baleal, Lagide and Baía. However, four years later other places were discovered, more precisely new spots between Baía and Supertubos [2]. The last-mentioned beach obtained, over time, enormous popularity and prominence [3]. For that reason, it is currently known world-wide and the stage of Rip Curl Pro, an event of international dimensions.

Analysing the recent history of the city of Peniche, we find that one of the main agents for the promotion and growth of this city was António José Correia. He was the mayor of Peniche from 2005 to 2017 who had sought, from that date until 2017, to

develop surf and all the areas that it encompasses. His role was so important in bringing together the territory and the surf competition organization, that he has been regarded by surfers as *the coolest mayor on tour*. Some examples of this development are the creation and construction of surf schools [10], the creation of beaches and surf guides, the opening (in 2012) of a high-performance sports centre, the creation of the accessible beach programme – Beach for Everyone (in 2015) and the promotion / branding of Peniche’s image as *Capital da Onda* (Wave Capital) (Figure 2). It distinguishes this region as the ideal place to surf. In fact, nowadays there is a significant number of trades and services that depend on this sport. In Peniche this modality is the largest contributor to wealth growth because it attracts investors and consumers who will directly and indirectly develop the regional economy [1].



Figure 2 – Peniche, The Wave Capital

Source: [6]

The Rip Curl Pro Peniche, held in the beach of Supertubos, is one of the stages of the main world surfing circuit. This city received the Rip Curl Pro Search for the first time in 2009. It is the only mobile stage of the world surfing circuit and the only one held in Portugal since 2002 [8]. This international event is mainly sponsored by the World Surf League. However, there are also some other important sponsorships to be mentioned such as the City Hall, the Portuguese Surf Federation, Portugal Tourism, Corona, Samsung, Billabong, among others.

The Rip Curl Pro has a specific feature that sets it apart from many others: its mobility, since it changes places every year. That specific characteristic is a favorable factor because it attracts surf champions from around the world, thus consequently bringing greater visibility to the regions where the event is carried out. In addition, it allows a revaluation and requalification of the place where the competition happens. Lastly, it is important to highlight that this event contributes to the reduction of seasonality, since it takes place in the low season (October).

The year 2009 was a turning year for the nautical tourism in that region. On June 23rd, it was officially announced the location of the 9th World Tour. Peniche was the chosen city and the event took place on the beaches of Supertubos, Lagide, Molhe Leste and Pico da Mota. This occasion was such a success that it ensured the continuation of several entities’ sponsorship, having thus allowed this region to become a mandatory

passage of the circuit until 2011 (and to receive again this event in 2018). Besides, the entity Turismo de Portugal awarded it the prize for the best event held in 2009 [6]. The attractiveness of a great diversity and quantity of tourists has given rise to some worries, some of the main being the preservation, promotion and renovation of natural resources, as well as the preservation of the regional social identities and values. To this end, the success of a tourist destination must be based on diversification, authenticity of the offer and on its differentiation. Besides, it is also important that there is a consolidated image of the destination and Peniche, with the brand Wave Capital being a strategic factor and an example of this statement.

In order to maximize the effects of this event, it is important to invest in marketing and in an advertising plan that increases the attractiveness of the city, promotes local development and advertises its best tourism products. This plan should consider the city brand and use it to build a cohesive and positive image of the region, through its products and its structures. What does matter to the success of such an event is to highlight that it is essential to find an understanding between all parts involved, including the local community that is still, for the most part, taking an involuntary role. The complementarity of services between stakeholders is a key element for the success of the Rip Curl Pro Peniche.

#### **4. Impacts of Rip Curl Pro Peniche**

There are several impacts on the organization of an event to be mentioned. Firstly, the social impact, which can be summed up in the consequences that an event may have on the life of local inhabitants. Secondly, the economic factor, which is perhaps the most important because in the organization of events it is crucial to obtain a value of revenues that is higher than the value of the costs associated with the organization and realization of an event [4].

The economic component is usually one of the indicators of success or failure of an event and this will have repercussions on the interest and the way in which the region and its inhabitants welcome the event and the tourists thereby attracted. In addition to socio-cultural and economic impacts, environmental impacts are also considered [15]. In the specific case of Peniche the main impact has been the chance to build and rebuild its image, due to global exposition brought by this world class competition. However, if on the one hand tourism can be a factor that enhances the development and requalification of a region, on the other, if poorly planned, it can lead to its self-destruction; therefore, it is crucial that good planning is carried out to avoid its environmental degradation and its economic, social and cultural failure.

Tourism generated by surf in this event has the particularity of being a niche tourism that attracts visitors who increasingly tend to appeal for the promotion and defense of environmental preservation. Thus, the main factors of attractiveness for tourists in search of a destination or a beach are the preserved and clean natural spaces

and the quality of waves and water. In that sense, the environmental preservation of a region will keep attracting these visitors, as it happens in Peniche.

Based on documents, statistics, other investigations and in conjunction with an interview with the mayor of Peniche, the general direct and indirect impacts of the Rip Curl Pro, over the years, under the economic, environmental and social-cultural conditions, are presented below (Table 1). Between the positive and negative impacts listed, it is shown that positive economic and social-cultural impacts have the biggest representation, through the perception related to this sporting event in Peniche.

*Table 1- Impacts of Rip Curl Pro in Peniche.*

Impacts	Positive	Negative
<b>Economic</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Economic development;</li> <li>- Creation of opportunities that improve and diversify the local economy (ex. the consolidation of the Peniche high-performance sport centre);</li> <li>- Job creation (through accommodation and restaurants openings, etc.);</li> <li>- The opening of the Europe's largest Rip Curl store in Peniche;</li> <li>- Creation and development of businesses and local commerce;</li> <li>- Attracting foreign capital through investment in the region;</li> <li>- Revenue from visitors' expenditures during the event;</li> <li>- Promotion of regional products (sardines of Peniche, pear of Torres Vedras, among others);</li> <li>- Stimulates entrepreneurship;</li> <li>- Attenuates seasonality.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Price inflation, especially in hospitality and catering sectors during the event;</li> <li>- Emergence of illegal surfing business; (illegal trade);</li> <li>- Growth of illegal housing to visitors;</li> <li>- Dependence on tourism to generate capital.</li> </ul>
<b>Environmental</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Environmental revaluation;</li> <li>- Environmental conservation through the harnessing of new pollution-free energy generating sources (ex. sea waves), planting trees, cleaning beaches and dunes, among others;</li> <li>- Awareness and creation of environmental preservation plans;</li> <li>- Emergency of environmental preservation associations (ex. Rip Curl Pro Planet and Magna Carta 2015).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Traffic congestions (pollution from vehicles);</li> <li>- Accumulation of solid waste left behind by people on streets and beaches.</li> </ul>

<b>Social-cultural</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Creation and restoration of supra and infrastructures (increase in the living standard of the inhabitants);</li> <li>- Rip Curl Pro as promoter of social responsibility (event accessible to all, especially people with special needs);</li> <li>- Greater tolerance between different cultures;</li> <li>- Exchange of cultural experiences;</li> <li>- Cultivates and celebrates the cultural traditions;</li> <li>- Execution of other cultural events that value the region;</li> <li>- Job opportunities.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Cultural and social differences between visitors and locals can generate conflicts;</li> <li>- Lack of skilled labour (will reduce quality of service).</li> </ul>
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Source: Authors

The Rip Curl Pro has been showing attractiveness for a large number of people travelling to Peniche to watch the competition. In 2015, only 14.4% (Figure 3) of the participants were residents in this municipality and about 62.8% were from other regions of the country.

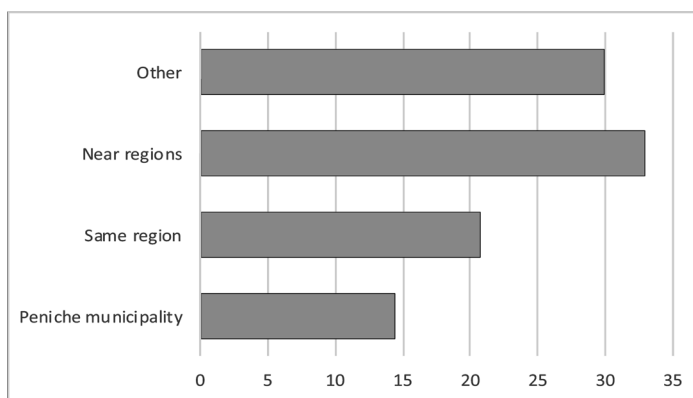


Figure 3 – Origin of visitors residing in Portugal (%)  
 Source: Adapted from [10]

Through Figure 4, it is possible to perceive that the distribution of the international visiting population is organized mainly in two main groups: the countries related to the main markets that visit Portugal in general terms (Spain, France, United Kingdom and Germany), representing 53.2%, and the group of countries that are represented in correlation with the most representative athletes in the competition (best surfers are mainly from these countries), that are Brazil, USA and Australia, which together represent 19%. This is an important percentage since referring to distant countries, demonstrating the attractiveness capacity of Rip Curl Pro.



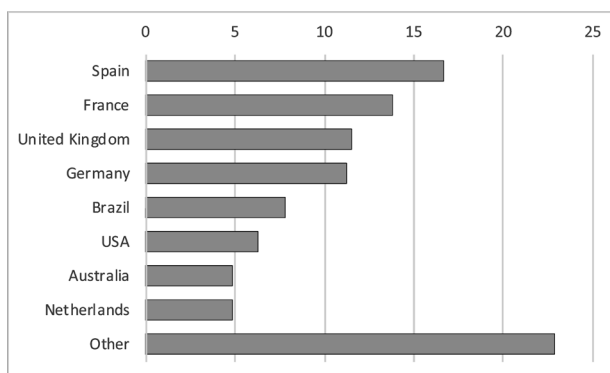


Figure 4 – International visitors by the country of origin (%)  
 Source: Adapted from [10]

Concerning the number of times the event was attended by visitors (until the edition of 2015), it results that a total of 57.2% [10] attended at least once. Out of those who had attended Rip Curl Pro Peniche in previous editions, 41.1% (Figure 5) result to have participated in two or three previous editions. Twenty five percent (25%) of the Portuguese group have participated six times before. Based on the data, it is possible to verify that the visitors show a tendency to loyalty in their participation in this event.

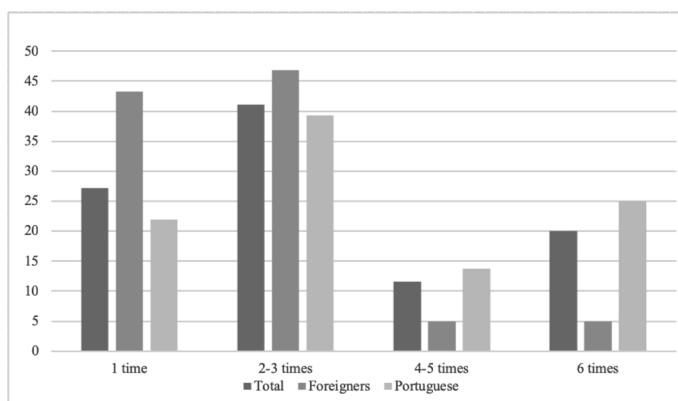


Figure 5 – Visitors by the number of previously attended editions  
 Source: Adapted from [10]

The Rip Curl Pro Peniche usually lasts ten days. Figure 6 shows that the relative majority of Portuguese visitors (42.1%) spend two or three days on the event while international visitors (largest percentage, 33.5%) spend four or five days there. This difference reflects a greater availability for the Portuguese to assist during the weekends

while foreigners take more time at their disposal since they are not in their usual place of residence (meaning that they are using their holidays) to assist the event.

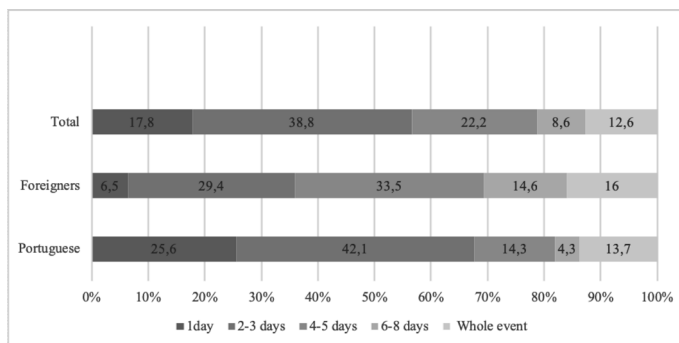


Figure 6 – Visitors by the number of days dedicated to the event (%)  
 Source: Adapted from [10]

Comparing the years of 2014, 2015 and 2016 (the year before, during, and the year after of the impact report), it results that the overall number of overnight stays has been increasing (135,605 in 2014, 155,939 in 2015, and 177,898 in 2016 (Figure 7). There was a variation of 31.2% between 2014 and 2016. The Portuguese visitors represent the majority of those who spent more than one night in Peniche, in each of the years, resulting in 115,544 nights in 2016 compared to 62,354 nights spent by foreigners. Considering the variation between the years of 2014 and 2016, it results that international visitors’ share in the number of nights spent was increasing (variation 2014-2016 = 35.2%) while the variation for Portuguese visitors was resulted in 29.1%. In that sense, Peniche is getting a higher rate as an international destination.

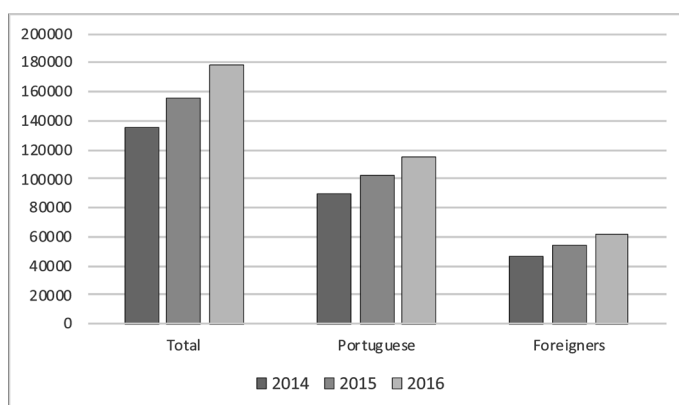


Figure 7 – Visitors by the overnight accommodation in Peniche  
 Source: Created from [12] and 13].

According to Rip Curl Pro organization, there were 100,000 individuals attending the event over the 10 days. According to the total average expenditure per respondent (after determining the values referring to transport, accommodation, food, shopping and the like), the amount of €38,48 referred to Portuguese visitors' spending, and €148,78 was spent by international visitors (Table 2). Based on the representativeness of the questionnaire applied to the visiting population, and on the extrapolation to the total number of visitors stated by the organization, it means a total of 64,700 Portuguese visitors and 35,300 foreigners during the entire 10 days' period of the event. In that sense, the estimated total expenditure of the Portuguese results in €2,489,780 and the one referring to foreigners in €5,252,093. The estimated total expenditure by visitors corresponds to 7,741,873 Euros. This is compounded by expenses incurred by the organization itself in Portugal (€ 1,600,000), which has a direct and final impact of 9,341,873 Euros [10].

*Table 2 - Average expenditure per respondent during the Rip Curl Pro 2015*

Type of expense	Average value per respondent (€)	
	Portuguese	Foreigners
Transport	18,00	51,87
Accommodation	38,81	70,38
Food	21,06	36,63
Shopping	40,04	59,27
Other	18,12	56,58
Total average expenditure	38,48	148,78

*Source: Adapted from [10]*

Regarding other impacts such as social networks and other forms of event promotion, they also played a key role in this event. According to a study on the socio-economic impact of Rip Curl Pro in Peniche [6], the number of views in 2015 reached 42.9 million, while in 2013 there were only 12.7 million views. These facts reveal an increasing growth rate in the popularity and interest in this event, which in turn also reveals an increasing growth in the prestige and visibility of Portugal and Peniche in nautical tourism. Facebook is also an important example of growth indication and adherence to this event. An increase from 1.5 million followers in 2014 to 4 million in 2015 demonstrates the raising visibility of the event.

## 5. Conclusion

Portugal reveals an effort dedicated to enhancing and promoting its image as well as to minimizing the effects of the economic and financial crisis of the late 2010's. Peniche and the entire region reveal strong potentialities regarding sustainable development by exploring the region's endogenous resources. Nautical and coastal

tourism sectors have been planned in order to develop and promote, through sustainable planning, the potentialities that this country offers, namely its products, services, its natural and cultural landscapes, its beaches, among others.

The impacts of Rip Curl Pro have been notorious. The main impacts of this event have been the attraction of foreign capital through investments in the region, the reduction of the unemployment rate, the improvement of local residents' living conditions, the development of entrepreneurship, the urban regeneration (that can be seen through the rehabilitation and restoration of the infrastructures), the development of environmental awareness and concern, and the increase of social responsibility (surfing for people with special needs, for example). The number of visitors of the event as well as its participants (foreign and domestic) has increased over the years as well as the revenue generated during the event. In addition, this event has proved to be an excellent engine for the development of entrepreneurship throughout the Western Portuguese region. People coming from all over the world, to assist this surf event, spend different days in the destination and repeat their participation during the years.

Finding in surf its brand image, Peniche has managed to promote not only the municipality but the entirety of the country. The fact that this event is unique in the region makes the impacts felt even more colossal.

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