

Tourism And Local Accommodation In Portugal: Concepts And Numbers

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Abstract

Objective: To systematize literature on Tourism and Local Accommodation (AL) in Portugal, in order to extract the main concepts and numbers involved in the topic;

Methodology: Literature review and database consultation on tourism and Local Accommodation (AL) in Portugal that leads us to the respective concepts and main numbers;

Results: On December 16, 2024, there were 160,412 LA places registered in the national registry in Portugal, which represents an increase of 69% compared to 2021. Despite the aforementioned increase, there are signs of some stagnation. Local Accommodation (AL) has contributed positively to the national GDP and to the modernization of large Portuguese cities and negatively to their loss of character and loss of well-being of locals due to the massification of tourism. However, AL in the rural context has contributed to alleviating the aforementioned massification;

Conclusions: Local Accommodation (AL) in Portugal has had a positive contribution to the Portuguese GDP and the modernization of its cities and a negative contribution to the massification of tourism in the cities and the loss of well-being of the inhabitants. AL in the Portuguese rural context constitutes an important alternative contributing to the alleviation of the tourist massification of large cities.

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I. Introduction

Local Accommodation (AL) in Portugal has been growing significantly and contributing positively to the Portuguese GDP on the one hand, but on the other hand contributing negatively to the massification of tourism in large Portuguese cities with the consequent harm that this fact entails.

In order to understand the concepts included in the theme, a literature review and a database analysis on local accommodation in Portugal were carried out.

The literature review and the cited databases led us to the following sequence: New tourists, new forms of accommodation and local accommodation; Local accommodation in Portugal; Local Accommodation in the main Portuguese cities; Local Accommodation in the rural context in Portugal.

II. Methodology

Assuming that Local Accommodation (AL) in Portugal has contributed significantly to the development of tourism and consequently to its importance in the GDP, we sought to find proof of this in the literature review on the subject and in the statistical data on Portuguese tourism.

A systematization of the content of scientific articles and databases on AL in Portugal was carried out in order to understand the evolution of the topic and to extract a summary of the conclusions of the aforementioned articles.

III. Literature Review On Tourism And Local Accommodation In Portugal

Scientific articles and databases were analyzed, which led us to the following sequence: New tourists, new forms of accommodation and local accommodation; Local accommodation in Portugal; Local Accommodation in the main Portuguese cities; Local Accommodation in the rural context in Portugal.

New tourists, new forms of accommodation and local accommodation

The growth of new forms of accommodation was driven by new consumption trends and sociocultural changes (Pato, 2020). Typically, these new forms of accommodation are sought after by a younger audience (Moadias, 2017). Tourists who opt for this type of accommodation are characterized as “new” tourists - young individuals, with great energy and a desire to explore and truly get to know the living conditions of the countries they visit and of people with a culture different from their own (Mowforth & Munt, 2016).

Among the new forms of accommodation, Local Accommodation (AL) stands out. More than 70% of travelers staying in AL are part of the millennial generation and stand out for their passion for travel (Mohn, 2016). Local accommodation is a popular choice for millennials who are attracted to the lifestyle and atmosphere of cosmopolitan cities. Factors such as meeting new people, connecting with other travelers and having experiences are also highly valued (Underwood, 2019). Oliveira-Brochado & Gameiro (2013) understand that this type of accommodation is recommended for travelers seeking informality. This type of accommodation is aimed at young tourists and the millennial generation (Y. Lee, 2013).

The millennial generation is made up of people born between 1980 and 2000 (Almeida, 2017; CICANT & HomeAway, 2018; Expedia.com, 2017; Marketing FutureCast Lab - ISCTE, 2017, 2018; Moadias, 2017; Mohn, 2016; Oliveira, 2019 ; Pereira, 2020; Tavares & Fraiz Brea, 2020; ; Y. Lee, 2013)

Millennials seek, above all, authentic, personalized, convenient and safe travel experiences. For millennials, authenticity is related, above all, to cultural appreciation, “living like a local”, independence and originality. This generation increasingly demands personalization of the travel experience, due to the large number of travel options available. They look for convenience at every touchpoint, from being able to book or cancel at the last minute, or even swap ticket names if needed, and having more payment options to split the cost with another person(s). Personalization of the travel experience is increasingly being demanded by millennials due to the large number of travel options. In this way, they challenge the industry to understand them better than they understand themselves.

Characterized as a diverse and inclusive generation, technologically savvy, millennials seek work-life balance, are interested in social responsibility and helping others (Bannon, Ford and Meltzer, 2011 cited by Richards et al., 2020) . An important characteristic of this generation is the fact that they enter the job market late and use travel as a means to develop themselves and their future careers (Richards et al., 2020). Though younger and with a lower average income, millennials spend at similar or even higher levels than general travelers (Hostelworld Group PLC, 2016).

For a generation that grew up with the internet, inspiration for travel plans is influenced by what they see on social media, review sites, blogs and travel forums. Millennials often look for real-time reviews on their mobile devices when deciding where to eat or stay, and despite having grown up bombarded with advertising, they are considered too sophisticated to be “fooled” by marketing campaigns (Y. Lee, 2013). They also use social media to connect and relate to others and feel the need to share their current location, activities and opinions with others, making it their method of interaction (Y. Lee, 2013). They are seen as technology-savvy ‘digital natives’ who have grown up with a much wider range of personal technology than previous generations (Richards et al., 2020).

The millennial generation includes backpackers who adopt the travel style called “Backpacking” designed for the millennial generation (Gamliel, 2020). A backpacker is typically between 20 and 24 years old, but can range from 15 to 60 years old; they prefer low-cost/budget accommodation options; they emphasize the opportunity to meet other travelers and have memorable experiences; flexible and independently organized travel plans; longer rather than shorter vacations; and a preference for informal and participatory recreational activities (Thyne et al., 2005 cited by Oliveira-Brochado & Gameiro, 2013). Backpackers are a segment of travelers who do not stay in expensive hotels, fly first class or dine in five-star restaurants. Instead, they eat at local markets and use the same public transport as locals. They seek to experience other cultures and environments, meet other people, make new friends and improve their knowledge (Oliveira-Brochado & Gameiro, 2013).

However, millennials are not the only ones who use AL. Studies carried out by the Research Centre for Applied Communication and New Technologies (CICANT) and HomeAway (2018), as well as studies by the Marketing FutureCast Lab - ISCTE (2017, 2018) reveal that AL users are also families, couples and friends who are identified as using AL more frequently and show a preference for online booking platforms, with emphasis on the Booking platform, followed by Airbnb and Homeaway (although little used). These are mostly female (52%) and have an average age between 30 and 49 years. Location, price and reviews from other guests on the platforms are the most relevant criteria for choosing a place to stay. Satisfied tourists are more likely to recommend their experience and to repeat the experience at the same accommodation.

According to Barata-Salgueiro (2017), the place to stay was driven by the change in the habits of guests who are increasingly looking for affordable accommodation and an experience closer to local lifestyles.

Most tourists who look for these establishments are backpackers, young people looking for more affordable accommodation so that they can use their budget to see more places or use it for other travel expenses

such as food. However, this type of unit is also sought after by families and middle-aged people who seek closer contact with the people who welcome them and their lifestyle, regardless of their financial resources (Almeida, 2017).

In addition to providing accommodation, that is, a place for guests to sleep and rest, the AL provides a “unique accommodation context, marked by greater or lesser contact between the owner of the accommodation and the tourist he receives and by the size and characteristics of the services that are made available, especially those complementary to mere accommodation” (Almeida, 2017).

AL establishments can offer several complementary services such as television, guest reception, internet, cleaning and tidying of the space, books and breakfast for guests (Almeida, 2017).

The internet and the emergence of peer-to-peer (P2P) online platforms such as Airbnb, HomeAway, TravelMob, VRBO, FlipKey, Roomorama, HomeEscape or Wimdu have culminated in an exponential increase in demand for this type of accommodation as they have simplified advertising and hosting advertising through the various platforms available to people anywhere in the world (Marketing FutureCast Lab - ISCTE, 2018). There are several options for local accommodation establishments on the internet, from rooms in residences, in old buildings restored for this purpose, in apartments integrated into old buildings without an elevator or even in gated communities with shared spaces such as a swimming pool.

Below we will address the issue of AL, understood as a new form of accommodation, but only focusing on Portugal, in order to understand some of the impact of this type of accommodation on Portuguese tourism.

Local accommodation in Portugal

New forms of accommodation include local accommodation (AL), which has been growing exponentially throughout the world and generating increasing demand, and Portugal is no exception (Marketing FutureCast Lab - ISCTE, 2018). In recent years, in Portugal, the simplified access regime, the encouraging tax framework and the favorable context for the development of the activity have led to a growth in AL establishments (Machado & Viegas, 2017). AL was included in Portuguese legislation in 2008, covering a variety of modalities that previously functioned as “illegal” accommodation from the perspective of the tourism industry (Turismo de Portugal, 2021b; Torkington & Ribeiro, 2020).

In Portugal, AL is understood as establishments that provide temporary accommodation services to tourists, for a fee, and that comply with the requirements set out in the Decree-Law for this purpose (Decree-Law no. 128/2014, of 29 August) (Assembleia da República, 2014). The concept of AL has been slightly modified over time, as can be seen from this new definition: “AL or those who provide temporary accommodation services, particularly to tourists, for remuneration, provided that they do not meet the requirements to be considered tourist enterprises.” Law No. 62/2018 of August 22. This law came to solve a problem that was spreading throughout the country, as there were numerous situations of accommodation that operated without formalities, without conditions and outside the law. Thus, local accommodation gained strength, starting to have its own regime. Both definitions are in line with the INE (2020a) which refers to AL as an establishment that provides temporary accommodation services for a fee, namely to tourists, and meets the requirements set out in the legislation in force, with the exception of the specific requirements of tourist enterprises.

In Portugal, AL can take the form of houses, apartments, accommodation establishments (including hostels) and rooms.

Housing: Accommodation unit consisting of an independent building;

Apartment: Accommodation unit comprising an autonomous fraction of a building;

Accommodation Establishments: Accommodation units consisting of rooms integrated into an independent part of a building;

Rooms: Operation of local accommodation in the owner's residence, with a maximum of 3 rooms.

Summarizing the concepts of modalities:

-House: accommodation unit consisting of an independent building, of a single-family nature;

-Apartment: accommodation unit consisting of an autonomous fraction of a building or part of an urban building capable of independent use;

-Accommodation establishments: accommodation units consisting of rooms, integrated into an autonomous fraction, an urban building or part of an urban building capable of independent use. They may use the name “hostel” when the predominant accommodation unit is a dormitory [i.e. when the number of users in a dormitory is greater than the number of users in a room], and if they comply with the other requirements provided for this purpose;

-Rooms: operation of local accommodation carried out at the holder's residence - corresponding to his/her tax domicile - when the accommodation unit consists of rooms in a number not exceeding three (Turismo de Portugal, 2021b).

The maximum capacity of ALs in Portugal is 9 rooms and 30 users, except for hostels, which have no capacity limit. The capacity of local accommodation, in terms of users, is limited by the characteristics and dimensions of the homes and cannot exceed the number resulting from multiplying the number of rooms by 21.

The registration of AL establishments in Portugal is done through prior communication with a deadline addressed to the Mayor of the territorially competent Municipal Council and carried out exclusively through the Electronic Single Counter provided for in article 6 of Decree-Law no. 92/2010, of July 26, which gives each request a local accommodation establishment registration number if, after the period of 10 or 20 days, there is no opposition from the same Mayor (Turismo de Portugal, 2021b).

The Local Accommodation Association in Portugal (ALEP) defines local accommodation as “a complex and demanding provision of accommodation services that cannot be confused with a passive income obtained by renting a property.” (ALEP, 2021).

AL had already existed in Portugal for several decades; however, it was disorganized and carried out informally, lacking regulation. In effect, the implementation of legislation for AL and the creation of the AL modality put an end to accommodation units classified as “parallel accommodation” that existed in tourist regions (such as the Algarve district) and especially in coastal areas as a means for people to supplement their income (Torkington & Ribeiro, 2020).

In 2012, Ordinance No. 517/2008, of June 25, was amended by Ordinance No. 138/2012, of May 14, which defined the minimum requirements to be observed by local accommodation establishments, as well as the procedure for registering these establishments. establishments next to municipal councils (Turismo de Portugal, 2021b).

Subsequently, in 2014, Decree-Law No. 128/2014, of August 29, came into force, which was later amended. The first was by Decree-Law No. 63/2015, of April 23, and the second occurred when Law No. 62/2018, of August 22, came into force (Turismo de Portugal, 2021b).

As AL challenges existing regulatory models, the legal regimes that regulate the operation of local accommodation establishments have been subject to changes in order to respond to the increase in activity both in Portugal and in other countries (Actualidad Jurídica Uría Menéndez, 2018).

From a positive perspective, the above leads us to the following question: Why do tourists choose this type of accommodation? To identify the main factors that lead AL users to choose this type of accommodation in Portugal, Oliveira (2019) conducted a study with 262 AL users in Portugal. The results of this study found the following: The majority of users are female (61.1%); are between 25 and 34 years old, with an average age of approximately 26 years old; the majority reside in Portugal (89.9%) and the remaining 10.1% reside abroad; in academic terms, 81.6% of users have higher education; 61.1% are employed; 23.3% are students; and the majority are single (53.3%). Regarding the motivation to use AL, most interviewees indicated as motivations the economic benefits and savings on travel costs when opting for AL, as well as the fun it provides, social interaction, social benefits and convenience. Regarding reasons for travel and length of stay, users traveled essentially for leisure reasons (90.1%), having, on average, stayed 4.93 nights in this type of accommodation. Users show a greater tendency to choose apartments as their type of accommodation (39.3%), followed by houses (29.4%) and accommodation establishments (26%), and they travel mainly with family (60%) and friends (27.9%). Furthermore, when choosing AL, they are influenced by comments and reviews published by other guests and make the reservation mainly through online platforms (78.2%), the most used being Booking (62%) and Airbnb (35.6%). Users demonstrate an intention to recommend and return to use AL as well as booking platforms.

From a negative perspective, the aforementioned also led us to a new question: Does AL contribute to the massification of tourism and with it the loss of quality of life for local inhabitants? In recent years, AL has acquired relevance as an economic activity and, at the same time, has helped to rehabilitate buildings in cities in Portugal and in almost all countries with tourist activity (Actualidad Jurídica Uría Menéndez, 2018). However, associated with its development, AL brought with it a massification of tourists that generated an increase in revenue for the tourism sector, but also led to a reduction in the tranquility of several places that are now full of tourists, the overloading of structures and in turn, this generated an exponential increase in property prices in urban areas most sought after by tourists and the expulsion of local inhabitants from these areas (Almeida, 2017). Furthermore, this activity has caused a decrease in properties intended for residential rental and consequently an increase in the price of housing rentals (Actualidad Jurídica Uría Menéndez, 2018).

These AL establishments can be located in city centers or outside them, in places where there are also hotel establishments or in spaces where the only offer consists of local accommodation units or rural hotels (Almeida, 2017). In the AL concept, accommodation establishments have been one of the most used modalities among private investors (Antunes, 2019).

In view of the above, we will analyze the literature and some data on AL from the perspective of the main Portuguese cities involved in the aforementioned massification and, after that, on AL in the rural context, as a process of potential alleviation of the aforementioned massification.

The local accommodation in the main Portuguese cities

According to the National Register of Local Accommodation (RNAL), in Portugal, in 2021, 94,886 AL were registered, representing 219,670 rooms and 370,778 beds available for 549,735 users (RNAL, 2021). On December 16, 2024, 160,412 AL were registered in the aforementioned RNAL, which represents an increase of 69% compared to 2021 (RNAL, 2024). Despite the mentioned increase there are signs of some stagnation.

In 2023, Local Accommodation (AL) captured more overnight stays than hotels in the Lisbon Metropolitan Area and the North region, accounting for 42% of overnight stays in Portugal last year. According to a study by Nova SBE presented at the 1st National Congress of the Local Accommodation Association in Portugal (ALEP), the figure is higher than the 15% reported by the National Institute of Statistics (INE), registering more than 47.7 million overnight stays in AL, 36.3 million more than the amount recorded in official statistics. This difference arises from the fact that official statistics only count overnight stays in AL units with 10 or more beds. On the other hand, the European Union statistics office (Eurostat) concluded that more than 90% of overnight stays take place in LA with less than 10 beds, therefore registering 113.5 million overnight stays in Portugal last year, and not the 77.1 million advanced by INE. To meet this demand for AL units, 1600 new hotels would be needed in the country (maintaining the ratio of overnight stays per hotel), admits the study “The Perception of the Value of Tourism in Portugal” (Creation of new local accommodation companies in decline, undated).

New AL registrations fell 64% in the first seven months of 2024, after a rush for new 2023 licenses. Between 01 Jan 2024 and 26 Jul 2024, 4146 new licenses were requested, 64% less than in the same period in 2023. We need to go back a decade to find a smaller number of new properties registered in this timeline (New AL registrations fall 64% in seven months, undated).

The creation of new local hosting companies appears to be on the decline. In the first seven months of 2024, compared to 2023, there were 2.1% fewer new companies. According to the sector, the problem is the instability in the law (Creation of new local hosting companies in decline, no date). However, digital platforms recorded double-digit increases in Local Accommodation bookings in the first quarter of 2024. For example, GuestReady expects to more than double its local accommodation portfolio in Portugal. Currently managing 1300 properties, it wants to reach up to 3000 units in the coming years, focusing on cities such as Aveiro, Coimbra, Guimarães or Braga (GuestReady expects to more than double its local accommodation portfolio in Portugal by 2024).

In Portugal, AL presents a record number of cancellations and simultaneously a colossal increase in new licenses. Registration cancellations in 2023 soared 85% compared to 2022, reaching 7150 units, and there were 16735 requests for new licenses, 40% more compared to the previous year, making this the second year, in total, with more requests, surpassed only by 2018 (20236) (Bipolar local accommodation with record cancellations and colossal increase in new licenses, no date).

In 2023, the number of new licenses rose by 40%, reaching an all-time high in the first half of the year. Cancellations increased by 85%, with owners wanting to avoid the new tax (Local Accommodation had a historic year with skyrocketing registrations and record cancellations, undated).

Around 46% of AL generate less than 12 thousand euro per year according to the conclusion contained in the 'Impact Assessment of Local Accommodation in Portugal', a study that the Nova School of Business & Economics carried out at the request of the sector association. The study in question shows that most owners have only one local accommodation unit and 76% are being directly exploited (46% earn less than a thousand euros per month from local accommodation, undated).

These variations should stabilize after the last change in the legal regime governing the AL (Change in the legal regime for the operation of local accommodation establishments, undated) through the Mais Habitação Program, approved by Law No. 56/2023, of 6 October (Legal Analysis - Law No. 56/2023 | DR, undated).

AL is considered a form of temporary furnished accommodation for tourists, allowing a link between tourists and cultural traditions, as well as the rehabilitation of cities and rural areas. Revenue management (RM), as a management methodology, allows improving the performance, effectiveness, and sustainability of AL management. There is a tendency towards the introduction of Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) specific to RM in Local Accommodation, framing a new management methodology, through the increasing availability of software for AL (Alves, 2023).

Regarding the type of accommodation they usually use as tourists, 43.90% (n=18) of those interviewed stated that they prefer to stay in Local Accommodation; 41.46% (n=17) prefer Hotel; 12.20% (n=5) prefer Farm Hotel and 2.44% (n=1) prefer Resorts.

According to the National Institute of Statistics (INE, 2024), in its tourism activity bulletin in July 2024, published on September 13, 2024, Portuguese municipalities presented the following indicators related to AL:

The municipality of Lisbon accounted for 16.2% of the total number of overnight stays, reaching 1.5 million (+3.0%, after +4.6% in May). Overnight stays by residents increased by 1.0% and those by non-residents increased by 3.3%. This municipality accounted for 20.0% of all overnight stays by non-residents in July.

Albufeira was the second municipality with the highest number of overnight stays (1.1 million overnight stays, accounting for 12.1%) and recorded a decrease of 0.9% (+2.7% in June). Overnight stays by residents decreased by 5.7% and those by non-residents increased by 0.7%.

In Porto, overnight stays totaled 621.5 thousand (6.9% of the total), and a growth of 8.3% was observed (+6.4% in June), with the contribution of overnight stays by residents (+4.1%) and non-residents (+9.0%). Porto stood out among the 10 municipalities with the highest number of overnight stays in July, also because it was the only one not to record a slowdown in growth.

Funchal (586.8 thousand overnight stays, weight of 6.5%) showed growth of 0.2% (+3.4% in June), to which non-resident overnight stays contributed (+2.4%), considering that overnight stays by residents decreased by 13.9%.

In all 10 municipalities with the highest number of overnight stays in July, overnight stays by non-residents exceeded those by residents (INE, 2024)

Tavares & Fraiz Brea (2020), in their study carried out with the aim of analyzing and confirming the determining characteristics in the choice of AL and hostels in the city of Porto, at a time of high demand for AL and hostels in the city of Porto, characterize the profile of the AL and hostel guest as being guests aged between 17 and 64 years old and an approximate average age of 27 years old, single (76.9%), and with an annual family income of less than €20,000 (over 50%). The main results show that around 70.6% of guests stay up to 3 nights, 42.8% of individuals stayed at the AL and hostel with friends, more than half have as their main objective tourism (53.8%) and getting to know a new city (19.2%), and 63.9% of individuals use the booking.com website to make reservations. Regarding the means of transport used on the trip, 47.1% of individuals use a car and 41.8% use a plane. Guests place great importance on the cleanliness of the place, the appearance of the common areas and having a pleasant surrounding area. Another aspect that they value a lot is security, not only inside the AL and hostel, but also in the surrounding area and they give preference to AL and hostels located in safe areas, with easy access to public transport and historical areas and in the oldest (historical) area of the city.

As mentioned previously, we will now analyze the concepts linked to AL, but now in a rural context, as a process that can potentially alleviate the massification of tourism in the main Portuguese cities.

The local accommodation in the rural context in Portugal

As we saw in the figures presented previously, AL can be an important driver of local development, but also in the growth of the inconveniences that mass tourism has demonstrated in the main Portuguese cities. Conversely, AL in rural areas has contributed to alleviating the aforementioned massification and is also beginning to proliferate in several Portuguese regions outside of large cities (Antunes, 2019).

AL can be classified as rural tourism (TER) and in Portugal it has seen significant growth over the last few decades, consolidating itself as a relevant sector in the national tourism context. Between 1990 and 2019, the number of TER ventures increased by more than 600%, with around 1.7 thousand establishments in operation in 2019. This growth translated into a significant increase in accommodation capacity, which exceeded 1300% in terms of available beds, increasing from approximately 61 thousand to almost 2 million overnight stays over this period (Silva & Carvalho, 2021). This scenario reflects the expansion of rural tourism in Portugal, driven by the growing demand for experiences in contact with nature and in low population density environments.

According to data from INE (2017), between 2013 and 2016, the growth in tourist accommodation capacity in predominantly rural areas was three times greater than that recorded in urban areas, which demonstrates the growing attractiveness of the rural context for the tourism sector. In 2019, TER enterprises represented around 25% of all tourist accommodation establishments in Portugal, a fact that reinforces the strategic importance of rural areas in the diversification and expansion of the national tourism offer (INE, 2021b; Silva & Carvalho, 2021).

However, despite this remarkable growth, rural tourism still faces significant challenges in terms of economic sustainability and socio-economic impact. Although TER has increased its presence in several regions of the country, the benefits to local economies are often limited, with difficulties in creating meaningful jobs and generating substantial revenues. Most TER ventures are small units, with an average of only 16 beds per establishment, often managed as family businesses that employ little external labor (Dashper, 2015). This business model is reflected in low occupancy rates and lower revenues when compared to urban hotels, which highlights the need for additional support so that TER achieves greater viability and economic sustainability (INE, 2021; Silva & Carvalho, 2021).

Additionally, the profile of tourists who visit these areas is mainly domestic, with TER units being preferred by local visitors seeking rest and authentic experiences in contact with local culture and nature. However, the flow of tourists to rural tourism remains small compared to sun and beach destinations or urban destinations, which limits the reach and profitability of TER units. Thus, rural tourism, despite its growth, still has a residual representation in the total set of tourist accommodations, especially when considering indicators such as overnight stays and length of stay of guests (Lane & Kastenholz, 2015; Silva & Carvalho, 2021).

Despite these challenges, AL in rural areas also presents several opportunities that can contribute to its development and consolidation. The growing demand for nature tourism represents a significant advantage for TER, as this segment is well positioned to attract tourists seeking experiences in contact with the natural environment and local cultural heritage. The Covid-19 pandemic reinforced this trend, as tourists began to value less dense and safer destinations, leading to an increase in demand for accommodation in rural and less urbanized areas (Silva & Carvalho, 2021).

Furthermore, local tourism offers an opportunity for rural areas to attract national visitors who rediscover their own territory, which can benefit local economies and promote a diversification of the tourism offer. Local accommodation in a rural context can also stand out for the implementation of sustainable practices and environmental responsibility, differentiating itself from other accommodation options by adopting an approach that prioritizes the preservation of the ecosystem and the use of local resources.

Diversifying the offer through innovative experiences is another relevant opportunity. Local accommodation in a rural context can integrate activities such as participation in agricultural practices, adventure tourism, wine tourism and well-being, creating personalized packages that respond to tourists' demand for unique and authentic experiences. This business model can also help to revitalize local economies, as it encourages the consumption of regional products and the creation of jobs in less developed areas (Pato et al., 2021).

Finally, support and incentives for the development of tourism in rural areas, at national and European level, represent an opportunity for the sustainable growth of the sector. These programs can provide financing and training for owners of TER and AL enterprises in rural contexts, enabling them to improve the competitiveness of their offerings and the quality of their infrastructure, which is essential for their long-term viability.

IV. Conclusions

The literature and data analyzed demonstrate the growing importance of AL in the Portuguese economy, namely in its economy, in its large cities and in the rural context, as well as presenting the respective positive and negative impacts of that tourist enterprise.

The results presented show that AL has contributed to the massification of tourism in large Portuguese cities and that AL in the rural context presents itself as an alternative, as it provides relief from the aforementioned massification. The growth of tourism, boosted by the AL figures, in Portugal demonstrates that it contributed positively and significantly to improving the Portuguese GDP and consequently to the modernization of the main Portuguese cities. On the other hand, it contributes negatively to the massification of tourism, which has led to the loss of character of large Portuguese cities and the loss of tranquility among local inhabitants, as well as the saturation of existing infrastructures. In the opposite direction, AL in a rural context has taken advantage of the mass tourism in large cities, as these have grown thanks to the increase in demand from tourists who want to escape the aforementioned mass tourism and are looking for calmer and more sustainable tourism.

From the above, we conclude that the “Beyond Portugal” has been a fundamental variable in the demand function of Portuguese tourism. It has contributed significantly to the Portuguese GDP, to the modernization of its large cities and also to the economic growth of some rural areas. However, the large Portuguese cities have suffered some loss of character and loss of well-being of their populations as a result of the mass tourism. However, AL in a rural context could contribute to alleviating the aforementioned massification and would enhance gains for the respective local populations.

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