Paraiba Starts Here: Analysis of the tourism potential of the Atalaia de Forte Velho Watchtower—Paraíba.

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Abstract: At the heart of the concept of heritage is the idea of preserving the past through multiple elements, which may range from materiality to value within a society. Bringing these aspects to the tourist context, heritage tourism can be understood as the contemplation of phenomena that carry values related to a community's past. The focus of this research was the Atalaia de Forte Velho in the state of Paraíba. The watchtower was built by the Portuguese as a port defense during the 16th century, and was listed as a heritage site by IPHAN in 1938. Taking these aspects into account, the study analyzes the underestimated tourism potential of the region, from the perspective of the historical and socioeconomic appreciation of the local community. Through an observatory methodology, the site, the infrastructure of the tourist trade and the provision of services for the population were analyzed. The results show that the site has potential to develop heritage tourism. Based on these results, a comparison was made with another heritage site in the same category, seeking to propose the development of actions that could promote the destination and improve the tourist experience, bringing benefits not only for the local community, but also helping to preserve the heritage for future generations.

INTRODUCTION

Heritage is an ongoing process. Phenomena that were once considered normal in the past, nowadays carry the history and values of a society. Because the environment is constantly changing, it is critical to preserve and conserve these elements so that future generations can enjoy them as well.

Defining heritage is not an easy task. Due to its vast application, the word has already been described as "anything that someone wishes to conserve" (Howard, 2003, p. 6). Although this definition is extremely vague, it encompasses the true essence of heritage. For so long, the word heritage had only been associated with the study of phenomena and artifacts collected and preserved in the national interest. But nowadays, its value lies not only for the national interest, but also in the motivation that leads people to preserve and conserve elements that are considered relevant to them (Howard, 2003; Harrison, 2010).

Through academic development, the scope of world heritage has extended, bringing new possibilities of definitions and classifications, which has helped further understanding of its meaning. The times led to the need for an international organization to classify and manage the heritage activities of countries.

Facing the damage caused by the Second World War, the United Nations saw the possibility of creating an entity that could protect the national historical artifacts of countries. To this end, the UNESCO was founded in 1945, with the idea of developing an educational, scientific and cultural organization that could not only protect the world heritage, but also collaborate to further understanding between nations and promote peace between countries. Consequently, a new definition of heritage was established, being described as "our legacy from the past, what we live with today, and what we pass on to future generations" (UNESCO, 2008, p. 5).

Nowadays, more than 1100 properties are protected by UNESCO, classified as cultural, natural and mixed sites. According to official statistics, the majority of properties are concentrated in Europe and North American, representing 47.23% of all the heritage sites currently registered.

Most of these heritage sites are strongly linked to the tourism activity, often representing the main, or the only tourism product of a region. According to Alvarez, Go & Yüksel (2016), marketing and communication are key to developing heritage as a marketable product, attracting visitors and local residents. The authors also emphasize the relationship between preservation and business, which must correlate with tourism development, bringing benefits not only for tourism, but also for the local community, whose heritage is thus safeguarded.

Taking these aspects into account, this study analyzes the underrated tourist potential of the historical watchtower known as the Atalaia de Forte Velho, from the perspective of its historical and socio-economic appreciation for the region's community. The watchtower, designated a heritage site by the National Institute for Historical and Artistic Heritage (Instituto do Patrimônio Histórico e Artístico Nacional - IPHAN), is a Portuguese colonial building of great importance for the port defense in the XVI Century. Located in the north of Santa Rita, a city belonging to the metropolitan region of the Paraíba capital, João Pessoa, it represents an historical landmark from the times of Portuguese colonization.

The development of this research is justified by the perception of two impacting factors related to the object of study that are being misused and even underestimated by the local population. The first is the historical and cultural importance of the Atalaia de Forte Velho, which is directly related to the Portuguese conquest of Brazil. The second is the market opportunity presented in the tourist context, which is little explored and could contribute to the socioeconomic development of the local community.

Heritage

The concept behind heritage has been discussed by many authors. Although they bring different characteristics to support their idea, Timothy (2011, p.31) sees a common denominator between the definitions: "what we inherit from the past and use in the present day". Despite its wide scope, heritage can be associated with many elements varying from materiality to experiences. To further understand its concept, some important aspects must be taken into account.

When it comes to heritage, one of the first ideas that comes to the mind is protection. Two terms, frequently associated with each other, were established to translate the essence of heritage protection. First, preservation refers to "actions and perhaps even interventions to maintain the object as it was found" (Howard, p.199, 2003). Second, conservation refers to the management of the protected heritage, in which is possible to implement some changes, provided they do not harm its analyses and interpretations of heritage (Howard, 2003; Harisson, 2010; UNESCO, 2018).

Therefore, each heritage has its own preservation and conservation challenge. To better understand this, we must consider some classifications. Nowadays, UNESCO (2018) divides heritage into three main categories: Cultural heritage, Natural heritage and Mixed heritage. Cultural heritage refers to everything that represents the legacy and values inherent of a society, regardless of its tangibility (Harrison, 2010). Examples

of Cultural heritage include buildings, languages, food, music, etc. Natural heritage, meanwhile, refers to areas, natural features, geological and physiographical formations that represent values, especially from the scientific perspective. Finally, Mixed heritage combines both characteristics of Cultural and Natural heritage, such as rock inscriptions, archaeological areas, etc.

Although the elements that belong to this classification are somehow quite distinct, they share some important aspects for understanding heritage: history and memory. Despite being closely associated with the concept of history, memory, according to Nora (1989) is the total exact opposite. History is known exclusively as the "representation of past" (Nora, 1989, p. 8), strictly related to a temporal line, mostly problematic and incomplete, always requiring analysis and critics, while memory is spontaneous, being responsible for produce meaning that helps the interpretation of things already experienced, connecting not only temporal events, but also the multiple nature of phenomena.

The discussion is taken up by Harrison (2010), who presents the point of view of some historians who criticize the distance between the two fields (memory and history), resulting in gaps, especially in tourist activity, that attempt to hide or "mask" some negative aspects of history, making the presentation more attractive to visitors. This argument is validated by the fact that memory is generally associated with pleasure, and tends to distance negative elements that do not have a direct impact on the person, designing, in some cases, interpretations that do not correspond to the truth of the facts exposed (Nora, 1989; Harrison, 2010; Meneses, 2013).

Concerning the topic of this study, all these elements outlined above are very important to understand how heritage plays a role in society. However, some questions, such as "how does a phenomenon become heritage?" have yet to be solved. This inquiry leads to the concept of interpretation, a very intrinsic review of a community's values associated with elements from the past.

Slack (2020), in his book, presents one of the most basic and important things that interpretation does: create connections. These connections may vary from temporal aspects to physical circumstances, often related to the lifetime experiences, and even emotional conditions of the individual who is interpreting them (Slack, 2020; Meneses, 2013). Furthermore, Murta and Albano (2002) state that interpretation is strictly related to values, which can make heritage appear more attractive and relevant, especially in the field of tourism (Torre, 2013).

Tourism in the metropolitan region of João Pessoa

Known as the city where the sun rises first, João Pessoa, capital of the state of Paraíba, is considered the most easterly city in the Americas (including the North America). Founded in August 1585, it is the sixth oldest capital in Brazil (Vanzella & Brambilla, 2022). The metropolitan area covers not only the capital itself, but also the eleven cities of Alhandra, Bayeux, Caaporã, Cabedelo, Conde, Cruz do Espírito Santo, Lucena, Pedras de Fogo, Pitimbu, Rio Tinto and Santa Rita, covering an area of 2,794.298 km². Nowadays, the city has a vibrant tourism sector, offering plenty of accommodation and restaurant options, as well as promoting various types of tourism, especially sun and beach tourism (INDEP, 2022).

Despite the prominent tourism segmentation, part of the heritage of the city of João Pessoa is protected by IPHAN, the entity responsible for managing Brazil's cultural heritage and ensuring legal compliance of its management established by UNESCO (IPHAN, n.d.). The first project coordinated by IPHAN in the capital started in 1938, with the protection of architectural buildings related to the religious and military field, such as Fortaleza de Santa Catarina, in Cabedelo, and Atalaia de Forte Velho, in Santa Rita, both built in the XVI Century. Today, more than five hundred buildings are recognized as heritage sites, reflecting various historical periods, and representing architectural styles, such as Baroque, Rococo, Colonial architecture and art nouveau (IPHAN, n.d.).

Focusing specifically on the Atalaia de Forte Velho, it is considered one of oldest buildings of the region. Located close to the Paraíba river, the watchtower was built in 1584 and was used as a Portuguese observatory, with sweeping views of the Paraíba river estuary (Moura, 2019; IPHAN, 2013).

Historically, Forte Velho was the first port at which the Portuguese fleet docked, considering the actual state of Paraíba . By that time, the French fleet had already established alliances with the native peoples of the region; the Potiguara, for the extraction of Brazilwood, a material widely used in Europe in colonial times. thus, it was the Portuguese fleet along with Spain (which held power over Portugal) that was responsible for founding the city of Forte Velho (Moura, 2019).

The construction of the watchtower was fundamental for ensuring military success in the conquest of the region now recognized as Paraíba. Its strategic location gives a view of the mouth of the Paraíba river and most of its tributaries. Built in stone with a rectangular prism shape, it was given the name of Atalaia, defined by the Academia Brasileira de Letras dictionary (2008, p. 173) as "1. Sentinel, vigilant. 2. Tower or watchtower. 3. High observation point."

Nowadays, the watchtower does reach its original height, due to natural wear and poor management of

the site, with local plantations growing very close to it over long period of time. Sugarcane was the most aggressive plantation to the site, due to its harvesting method, which uses fire to strip away the leaves surrounding the sugarcane. This process caused some of the stones on the tower to loosen, due to the heat given off by the fires. To mitigate this, the IPHAN established some protective measures, including banning farming that uses abrasive methods that can harm the building, and demarcating a hundred-meter zone between the site and the fields (IPHAN, n.d.).

The large number of agricultural fields around the watchtower have also brought other problems, such as land erosions. Most of these erosions are more than a meter deep, which be an issue affecting accessibility to the site.

Despite the poor management of the heritage site, the Atalaia de Forte Velho represents a very important tourist attraction, especially due to its historical context, which contributes to the understanding of the colonial past. A knowledge of the past is important for perceiving the current social context, and also for the whole community around it, which can benefit from tourism activity, both socioeconomically and through the jobs created, as well as the historical and cultural benefits, through the communication, promotion and preservation of their perception (Dall'agnol, 2012).

Tourism

The concept of tourism has long been discussed among theorists, who always associate their theories in terms such as "travel" (Page, 2019). the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO, n.d.) defines tourism as "activities of persons traveling to and staying in places outside their usual environment for not more than one consecutive year for leisure, business and other purposes". Thus, visitors are the focus of tourism, being classified in two groups: tourists (overnight visitors) and excursionists (same-day visitors).

due to its great versatility, tourism activity can interact in different spheres and contexts. As "one of the most globalized sectors of the world economy" (Netto, 2017), it is responsible for connecting communities, establishing communication and promoting cultural exchanges. In the destinations, products, services and activities are provided to create memorable experiences for the tourists (UNWTO, n.d.).

Despite being closely associated with leisure, tourism has a very heterogeneous segmentation, which can suit different tourist profiles and their motivations. Understanding the segmentation of the tourism market is important for developing a destination, attracting the right consumers through marketing methodologies that will lead to the better use of its potential (Mendes & Guerreiro, 2015).

For the development of this research, we shall focus on

heritage tourism, which can be understood as contact with phenomena represented through artifacts, practices or experiences, tracing the past and present of a community (Prohask, 2015).

To further understand the heritage as a form of tourist, it is necessary to discuss its operation, especially because it involves economics matters. Tourism, unlike other sectors, requires scientific investigation, in order to invest efforts to develop it (Mayer & Yogt, 2016, p. 55). Lehtimäki et al (2008) also affirms that "heritage development is a risk investment", based on many factors, such as length of visitors' stay, that, according to their research, is far shorter than in places that provide leisure and relaxation, extending to no more than two days spent in the urban centers, and just a few hours in smaller towns (Lehtimäki et al, 2008; Alvarez, Go & Yüksel, 2016). In order to understand about heritage tourism in more depth, it is important to analyze some characteristics, such as the types of heritage tourism, and its demand.

Starting with the types of heritage for the tourism field, we have already mentioned how versatile it can be. From this perspective, Jimura (2019) suggests three classifications. Heritage consists of: objects (elements that people can see), attractions (activities that people can participate in) and destinations (sites, generally uninhabited, that people can explore).

As in the categorization of heritage sites, tourist demand is highly segmented and heterogeneous (Alvarez, Go & Yüksel, 2016). From this point of view, Timothy (2011) offers a specific classification for heritage tourism. The author divides heritage tourism demand into two groups: "hardcore/serious heritage visitors" and "casual heritage visitors". Both are basically differentiated by their circumstances. The first group is made up of people who travel exclusively to visit the heritage site of interest, this being their main motivation, while the second group is made up of people who opportunely visit the heritage site due to the convenience of being in the same area, though this is not necessarily their primary motivation.

In contrast, Timothy (2011) has also shown that the motivation of heritage tourists is closely associated with the educational field, revealing a historical and cultural curiosity, mostly related to skills and hobbies previously learned. Other motivations, such as "spare time", "showing guests around", "completing school assignments" and "getting out of the house" have also shown relevance.

Tourist activity depends on the association of stakeholders that can manage its operation (Alvarez, Go and Yüksel, 2016), specially for heritage sites, due to its protection challenges. The economic pressure established by the business industry is one of main factors that can affect the protection and well development of heritage tourism, and when combined with the lack of interest of the government it might become obsolete

and also affect the memory and history interpretation of a community (Alvarez, Go & Yüksel, 2016; Howard, 2003).

In Brazil, Köhler (2011) states that many cities have systems available to meet the demand for cultural attractions, but a lack of public policy has led to a lack of preservation of these heritage sites, or their promotion and development. The author also brings data that demonstrate that there is a lack of resources to restore and preserve the assets, stating that 50% of the heritage properties are degraded and 25% needed repairs and maintenance. Many of these sites are abandoned and underused.

When it comes to the context of Forte Velho, neither the government nor private institutions have shown interest in turning the region into a tourist hub; therefore the responsibility for its management has been left to the local community. With this in mind, Almeida (2016) proposes a community-based tourism for the city of Forte Velho, which focuses on the local population as those active in promoting and developing tourism.

In his research, Almeida (2016) found that tourism was not much discussed with the community, and the lack of a tourism-related entity was one of the reasons for this. However, most of the interviewees were aware of the opportunities and improvements that tourism could provide in their lives. The author presents some of the reasons for the lack of tourism development in the region (Table 1).

Table 1: Shortcomings and weaknesses in tourism development observed from the community perspective, pointed out during the tourism diagnosis workshops in Forte Velho, PB.

PERCEIVED SHORTCOMINGS		
Basic structure and services	**tourist structure and services**	**Training and man-power**
- Public transport (low availability of bus and speedboat routes)	- Lack of tourist signage and entrance gateway	- Lack of trained professionals to act as tourism guides
- Environmental education aimed at community residents	- Lack of a tourist information point	- Lack of qualified professionals providing quality services
- Improvements in health conditions and assistance to families	- Lack of activities for visitors	- Lack of trained first aid professionals
	- Lack of promotion of the destination	

Note. From "ECOTURISMO E TURISMO DE BASE COMUNITÁRIA NA COMUNIDADE DE FORTE VELHO, PB: DIAGNÓSTICO E PROPOSIÇÕES" by A. R. B. de Almeida, 2016.

Despite the lack of comfort, the city of Forte Velho has been associated with tourist activity for a long time in the local newspaper. Advertisements for leisure activities such as picnics have been announced. However, the precariousness of the structure has also revealed that it has never been a priority for the local government, since nothing has been done to improve these aspects or to develop tourism in the region.

"Tambaú, Santa Rita, Mandacarú, Jacaré, Ribeira, Forte Velho, Cabedelo and Ponta de Mattos are more or less pleasant places offered for such excursions; but the lack of regular transport and convenience made us stop and choose Jacaré, Cabedelo and Ponta de Mattos because of the railway line that easily leads us to the outskirts." (Gazeta da Paraíba, 1889).

Drawing comparisons between the actions carried out in favor of tourism is important in order to understand its importance within its social contexts. Also the fact that it was mentioned as a tourist destination more than a century ago indicates that there is untapped potential. But making the most of this potential can bring countless benefits, not only for the community in socioeconomic terms, but also for the entire state of Paraíba, due to its historical and cultural wealth.

METHODOLOGICAL PROCEDURES

For this study, initially two bibliographic reviews were carried out, the first through a literature review, seeking definitions for the main topics of the research. The second one focused on the object of study (the Atalaia de Forte Velho), which was mainly provided through IPHAN's heritage records, as well as a few other searches carried out with the same object. It is important to mention that the bibliographic review phase was fundamental to understand how the object of research fits within the context of heritage tourism, enabling an intensive diagnosis of the current context of which the watchtower is a part.

The local diagnosis was carried out on July 9, 2022, through a visit to the city of Forte Velho and a walk out to the watchtower. For this diagnostic phase, three types of observation were performed: participant observation (when the observer actively participates in the observed field), observation of others, and systematic observation (when there is a standardized scheme for observation) (Flick, 2009).

The first stage of diagnosis focused on the walk out to the Atalaia de Forte Velho. In this stage, the Wikiloc app was used, which records not only the kilometers and route, but also the height above sea level. The participant observation approach was also used to analyze the performance of the walk, based on five criteria established by the app (easy, moderate, hard, very hard and expert). Along the way, the approach "observation

of others" was used to analyze the performance of the guided tour, which was based on historical and regional knowledge, giving the walker an immersive tourism experience. The development of this stage was essential to check and assess the route, which contributed to the perception of the tourist potential in the region.

On reaching the site, the diagnosis took another path. Through systematic observation, it was verified whether the protective measures established by IPHAN were still present and if there have already been any changes. The potential interaction that tourists could have with the heritage site was observed, including historical and experiential aspects, such as information boards for its appreciation. All this data was registered through photography.

Returning to the center of Forte Velho, a diagnosis was made of the potential tourist facilities (restaurants, bars, accommodation and other attractions), to determine the structure and services offered.

Finally, an interview was carried out with one of the few tourist guides that offer tours to the watchtower. The interview, which was recorded, lasted seventeen minutes and focused on the citizens' perspective of the watchtower as an attractive site for heritage tourism, and the socioeconomic benefits that it could bring for tourism development in the region. The interview also revealed the expectations surrounding converting the site into a tourist hub, and some of the issues that might arise with this transformation.

The data analyses were then were divided into three parts. In the first, data were cross-referenced, to identify gaps in the heritage records. In the second, discourse analysis was performed, to investigate the relationship between the Atalaia de Forte Velho and the population, and between them and tourist activity. And in the last part, a comparison was made with another heritage site of the same category, which has been used to promote tourism in Portugal.

To establish the comparison between the European heritage site and the Atalaia de Forte Velho, a data collection was held in the beginning of March 2022 through observation and experimentation of the tourist product. The data were stored in the form of photographs and textual records, which helped to establish a comparison between the two heritage sites.

The results from these analyses led to the development of the SWOT matrix, which demonstrates the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats of the Atalaia de Forte Velho as a tourist attraction, indicating its heritage tourism potential.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Through the data collection, some information can be added, helping us to understand a little more the heritage context of the site. According to the heritage book of IPHAN, the Atalaia de Forte Velho (Figure 1), registered as "Case no. 48-T-38 / no. 98" was officially declared a heritage site on August 9, 1938.

Figure 1: Atalaia de Forte Velho
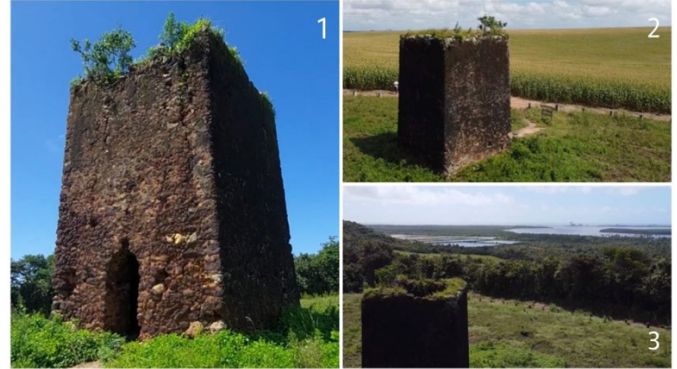
Note. Watchtower Atalaia de Forte Velho seen from the ground (1); West view of the watchtower (2); East view of the watchtower with the mouth of the Paraíba River beyond (3) by the author, 2022

The strategic location for the watchtower was decided on by Spanish general Diogo Flores de Valdez and Portuguese merchant Frutuoso Barbosa, who in 1584, determined its construction in sandstone and lime mortar, resistant materials that were common in colonial Portuguese constructions in Brazil. In 1585 the watchtower was attacked by French troops allied with the natives, which led the Spanish soldiers to abandon the place, later becoming a ruin.

Nowadays the access to the watchtower site requires a moderate 3.5km walk, departing from the arrival pier of Forte Velho. Only 73 meters above the sea level, the watchtower is strategically located to give an view of the Paraíba river mouth and its tributaries. The walk to the site passes through remnants of Atlantic Forest and sugarcane fields. As the path branches several times on the way, it is recommended that visitors take a local guide to accompany them.

The region has some auxiliary tourism equipment that offers support for those wishing to visit the watchtower, such as bars, restaurants, accommodation establishments, tourism guides, and even other activities besides visiting the tower. To further visualize its support in the development of tourism, it is important to analyze each one. Starting with the food and beverage sector. Forte Velho has five establishments that offer varied meals and snacks, especially seafood, this being one of the main cuisines of the region. Most of the establishments are open Tuesdays to Sundays, 9 am to 5 pm.

Moving on to accommodation establishments, the region has only one, relatively humble establishment, with the price per stay ranging from R$ 120,00 to R$ 150,00 for two people. However, according to the local guides, most tourists who visit Forte Velho do not

spend more than ten hours in the region, having the cities around as support. Entering this aspect, it is important to mention the access ways to the center of the city. There are two ways to reach Forte Velho. The first one and the most commonly used by tourists is the boatbus (Figure 2), which crosses the Paraíba river, connecting with Costinha and Cabedelo. The second is by road, on the PB-011

Figure 2: Boatbus

Note. Boatbus docked in port of Cabedelo (1); docked in dock of Forte Velho (2); sailing along the coast of Cabedelo (3) by the author, 2022.

As already mentioned previously, the region has a few trained people to act as tourist guides. However, the service is very precarious in its dealings with tourists, and according to the guide who accompanied the author during the research, few of them offer guided tours or promote tourism. To justify the situation, he said "They say there are no tourists". The professional training received by the population was in relation to a project held by IPHAN in partnership with Sebrae around 2017 aimed at developing the knowledge and promoting tourism to the region.

Besides this project, another one was developed in 2015 by the researcher Antonio Almeida, which held workshops to discuss the potential of the local community to develop ecotourism in the region. As a result, the author identified that:

"Most of the workshop participants recognize tourism as an important activity for the community of Forte Velho, while understanding that they are oblivious to this process - which means, the tourism has not brought direct benefits to themselves or their families." (Almeida, 2016).

Another aspect emphasized during the interview that indicates the lack of local community involvement is their expectations of the implementation of tourist activity in Forte Velho. Despite many having a positive socioeconomic scenario in mind, some concerns were raised, such as a potential lack of security due the influx of large flows of visitors. Indeed, this is one of the impacts that can occur due to mass tourism. As stated above, the local population is an important agent in

the development of tourism, therefore it is important to be aware of their views in order to promote a sustainable relationship between tourism and the local community.

Establishing a connection with the theory proposed by Prohaska (2015), "heritage tourism is emerging as one of the most promising areas of economic development for inner city neighborhoods, smaller communities, and even isolated rural areas". Despite the lack of interest in tourism among the majority of the population, the promotion of other activities has increased since the development of these projects, and has helped attract interest in visiting the Atalaia de Forte Velho. Some examples are boat tours along the Paraíba river, horse riding, and cycling, the latter being the most popular activity. Forte Velho receives many tourists seeking its cycling routes. The routes mostly start in the city of João Pessoa, and pass through the town of Cabedelo, where a boat takes them across Paraíba river to reach Forte Velho. Finally, the route takes them to the watchtower. At the end of the route, the cyclists often congregate in the restaurants, where they enjoy the local cuisine and the facilities offered by the establishment, such as swimming pools and recreational areas.

Although some of these activities and establishments are not directly related to visiting the watchtower, they represent potential tourism facilities. However, it is noticeable that the population is not prepared to receive mass tourism, due to the precariousness of some installations, which would not be able to withstand an influx of large volumes of consumers. It is also seen that the knowledge of the tour guides is not complete, with some gaps in their knowledge of the history of the watchtower, resulting in an inaccurate interpretation of heritage. However, because the service is provided by the community, they do have extensive knowledge of the local geography and biodiversity, immersing tourists in the tourism experience.

Taking these facts into account, a SWOT matrix (Table 2) was developed, aiming to identify the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats related to the Atalaia de Forte Velho, so as to enable it to fulfil its potential heritage tourism attraction.

Table 2: SWOT Matrix of the Atalaia de Forte Velho as a potential heritage tourism attraction.

STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES
- Great historical-heritage value; - Vast biodiversity; - Proximity to the capital (João Pessoa); - Access by land and sea; - Serves many types of tourism; - Geographically scenic area.	- Lack of preparation and expectations of the population about tourism; - Lack of facilities for tourists; - Failure to promote it as a destination; - Lack of political and private interest in tourism development.

OPPORTUNITIES	THREATS
- Socioeconomic development of the local community; - Job creation; - Development of gastronomy based on local products; - Educational visits.	- Depredation of the heritage due to disuse; - Devaluation of the heritage due to lack of historical knowledge of the community; - Devastation of the biodiversity due to harmful agricultural activities.

Note. By the author, 2022

Mediating these analyses, we see that the Atalaia de Forte Velho does have tourism potential, but for its proper management as a heritage site, it is important to implement some measures that will improve the quality of visitors' experience (Prohaska, 2015).

Mediating these analyses, we see that the Atalaia de Forte Velho does have tourism potential, but for its proper management as a heritage site, it is important to implement some measures that will improve the quality of visitors' experience (Prohaska, 2015).

A comparative analysis is established with another heritage site in the same category of the watchtower in study; Lousã Castle, in Portugal. This heritage site, located in the district of Coimbra, is part of the historic Castles and Town Walls Trail of the Mondego, which provides a tourist experience aimed at visitation of 11th Century heritage monuments relating to the Christian conquest and defense process (Agency for Development, n.d.).

Lousã Castle presents some similarities with the Atalaia de Forte Velho in terms of the local structure. However, its site has been developed to promote tourism, through some actions that could easily be implemented at the watchtower to turn it into a tourist attraction in the same way.

Starting with the setting, Lousã Castle is located 2.7km from Lousã city center. Tourists can get there by one of two ways: the M580 road and the Sra. da Piedade pedestrian route. Arriving at the castle, no tickets are required, and visitors can enter from Wednesdays to Sundays, 10 am to 6:30 pm, with a lunch break between 1 pm and 2:30 pm. Approaching the castle, there are information boards giving information about the history of the castle, written in Portuguese and English, and also in Braille. The boards also have a QR code directing the visitor to audio guides in Portuguese, English, French, German and Spanish (Figure 3)

Figure 3: Lousã Castle

Note. Lousã Castle inner access stairs (1); information boards (2 and 3), photographs taken by the author, 2022.

Inside the castle, there are some discreet metal structures to help visitors to reach the tallest towers, without causing damage to the original stone structure (Figure 3). This gives an idea of its use in medieval times. Despite the high flow of tourists, there are no tour guides or staff members to support the tourist visitation, another similarity with the Atalaia de Forte Velho. A model is provided, showing the addition of the staircase and information boards for further interaction with the watchtower (Figure 4).

Figure 4: Proposed model for greater tourist immersion in the watchtower
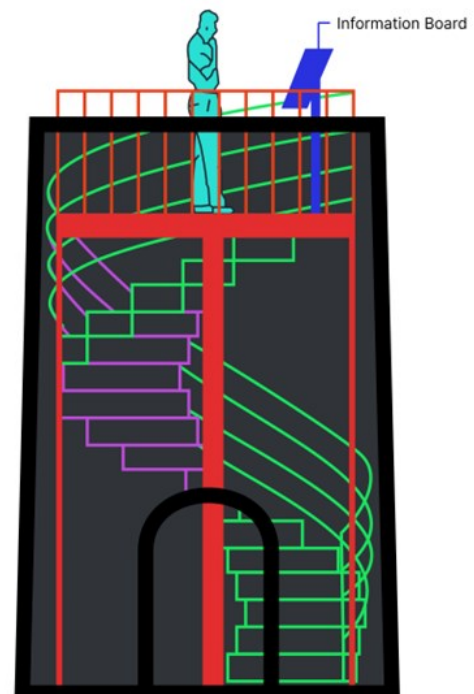
Note. By the author, 2022.

CONCLUSION

Considering the results of this research, we can state that the Atalaia de Forte Velho represents a potential

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heritage attraction due its historical importance during the conquest and colonization of Brazil. Despite receiving few tourists, it has a structure that meets the current demand. However, it is important to understand that in order to promote tourism, the heritage site will require a makeover (adding stairs and information boards, as in the proposed model), and the facilities for tourists will also need to be offered, such as bars, restaurants, and places to stay.

From a historical perspective, the Atalaia de Forte Velho represents a landmark in the Brazilian colonial context, being one of the oldest constructions in the country. Nevertheless, it is almost not discussed, especially in the educational sphere, which usually emphasizes the process of European conquest of America. The watchtower also represents a potential attraction for heritage tourism, not only for educational purposes, but for anyone wishing to visit this historical monument of Brazilian culture.

The possibility of developing a tourism hub in Forte Velho represents a profitable opportunity from a socio-economic point of view that has for a long time has been underused and even underestimated by the local community. When it comes to making the watchtower a more attractive tourist site, several aspects are noted. Most of them are down to poor government management of tourism in region, however, understanding the local community of Forte Velho as the main characters in the tourism service provision is the key to developing a work of excellence, having in mind their limitations and working on them to not only to secure a positive support for the tourists, but guarantee a good preservation and dissemination of their history, culture and heritage that is in focus and aimed to be visited and known by other people.

To secure the success of the heritage tourism around the Atalaia de Forte Velho, it is essential to develop further research about the segmentation and consumer profile, so that the tourism promotion can bring effective results, increasing the demand for the attraction. It is also important to mention that this research helped spark interest in tourist activity among members of the local community, which for a long time have been disowned . Thus, it is crucial to promote these discussions with the local community, to ensure that this valuable tourist and heritage wealth is not lost or underused, failing to promote the intellectual and historical development of the region.

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