THE SENSE OF BELONGING AMONGST TOURISM STUDENTS IN BRAZIL: A COMPARISON OF THE PERCEPTIONS OF BACHELOR AND ASSOCIATE DEGREE STUDENTS

O SENTIDO DE PERTENCER DE ESTUDANTES DE TURISMO NO BRASIL: UMA COMPARAÇÃO DAS PERCEPÇÕES DE ESTUDANTES DE BACHARELADO E TECNOLOGIA

EL SENTIDO DE PERTENECER DE ESTUDIANTES DE TURISMO EN BRASIL: UNA COMPARACIÓN DE LAS PERCEPCIONES DE LOS ESTUDIANTES DE BACHILLERATO Y DE ENSENÃNZA TECNOLÓGICA

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ABSTRACT: This work analyzes the profiles of undergraduate students of tourism at two public universities in the south of Brazil, aiming to understand the motivations that led them to choose a career in tourism, and how they integrate themselves into the social fabric and appropriate the university as their own. It is a descriptive and predominantly quantitative study, focusing on undergraduate students enrolled in different types of career paths: a bachelor's degree and a technologist degree (similar to an associate degree) in tourism. Primary data on the students were collected through a structured questionnaire, with

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questions related to the students' personal profiles, their route of entry to the universities, their motivations for studying tourism at those universities, and their sense of belonging to the university and to the city in general. The data were analyzed using Exploratory/Confirmatory Factor Analysis (E-CFA) to test factors brought from the literature, a Structural Equation Model Analysis to assess the relationships between the factors, and mean comparisons to identify significant differences between universities and groups. The results confirmed that the motivations for choosing to major in tourism are influenced by the opinions of others and by the convenience at the university; they also confirmed that the motivations for choosing tourism as a career influence social integration and the sense of academic belongingness.

KEYWORDS: Tourism; Career choice; Undergraduate studies; Sense of belonging to the University.

RESUMO: Este trabalho analisa o perfil de estudantes de graduação em turismo de duas universidades públicas do sul do Brasil, com o objetivo de compreender as motivações que os levaram a escolher uma carreira no turismo e como eles se integram ao tecido social e se apropriam da universidade. Trata-se de um estudo descritivo e predominantemente quantitativo, com foco em estudantes de graduação inscritos em diferentes tipos de carreiras: diploma de bacharelado e tecnólogo em turismo. Os dados primários sobre os alunos foram coletados por meio de um questionário estruturado, com perguntas relacionadas ao perfil pessoal dos alunos, sua rota de entrada nas universidades, suas motivações para estudar turismo nessas universidades e seu senso de pertencer à universidade e à cidade em geral. Os dados foram analisados por meio da análise fatorial exploratória/confirmatória (E-CFA) para testar os fatores trazidos da literatura, uma análise do modelo de equações estruturais para avaliar as relações entre os fatores e as comparações médias para identificar diferenças significativas entre universidades e grupos. Os resultados confirmaram que as motivações para escolher a graduação em turismo são influenciadas pelas opiniões de outras pessoas e pela conveniência na universidade; eles também confirmaram que as motivações para a escolha do turismo como carreira influenciam a integração social e o sentimento de pertencimento acadêmico.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: Turismo; Escolha de carreira; Estudos de graduação; Sentido de pertencer à Universidade.

RESUMEN: Este trabajo analiza el perfil de estudiantes de graduación en turismo en turismo de las universidades publicas del sur de Brasil, con el objetivo de comprender las motivaciones que los llevaron a elegir una carrera de turismo y, como ellos se integran al tejido social y se apropian de la universidad. Se trata de un estudio descriptivo y predominantemente cuantitativo, con foco en estudiantes de graduación inscriptos en diferentes tipos de carreras: diploma de licenciatura y tecnólogo en turismo. Los datos primarios sobre los alumnos fueron colectados por medio de un cuestionario estructurado, con preguntas relacionadas al perfil personal de los alumnos, su ruta de entrada en las universidades, sus motivaciones para estudiar turismo en esas universidades y su censo de pertenecer a la universidad y a la ciudad en general. Los datos fueron analizados por medio del análisis factorial exploratorio / confirmatorio (E-CFA) para atestiguar los factores traídos de la literatura, un análisis del modelo de ecuaciones estructurales para evaluar las relaciones entre los factores y los promedios comparativos para identificar diferencias significativas entre universidades y grupos. Los resultados confirmaron que las motivaciones para elegir la graduación en turismo son influidas por las opiniones de otras personas y por la conveniencia en la universidad; ellos también confirmaron que las motivaciones para la elección en turismo como carrera influyen a la integración social y el sentimiento de perteneciente académico.

INTRODUCTION

The tourism industry is an important economic activity in Brazil, but recently, it has experienced ups-and-downs. Events such as the World Cup in 2014, and the Olympic Games in 2016, significantly increased visitor numbers and brought major advances for the tourist infrastructure of certain destinations. On the other hand, the political scandals and the economic crisis that plagued the country after 2015 were detrimental to public safety and economic activity, and had an adverse effect on some important destinations. The tourism and hospitality industry worldwide has faced the problem of attracting and retaining quality employees, leading to a shortage of skilled personnel to staff the ever-growing number of tourism and hospitality businesses (Richardson, 2009). The tourism industry, as an area of employment, is somewhat ambiguous for staff personnel: it is a glamorous area to work in, but the status and the salaries are low (Riley et al., 2002, in Richardson, 2009). According to Santos, Costa & Malerba (2015), some professionals prefer to work in other areas due to the low wages and the difficulty of advancing professionally in the tourism industry.

The placement of tourism students, and their retention in small towns after graduating, is challenging for universities and the government. As Jenkins (2001) states, "Many hospitality students, through exposure to the subject and industry, become considerably less interested in selecting hospitality as their career of first choice". This may be associated with the lack of interest among some Brazilian universities in offering full degree programs in tourism at master's and doctorate levels (Algemiro & Rejowski, 2015).

Higher education institutions are facing increasingly complex challenges such as rapidly growing global competition, changes in funding regimes, and a greater emphasis on graduate employability (McGregor et al., 2002, cited in Hemsley-Brown & Oplatka, 2015), which demand a deeper understanding of the reasons that drive students' university choice (Simões & Soares, 2010). In the past, most of the places offered by public universities in the interior of Brazil were typically occupied by students from the surrounding region. Nowadays, however, due to the implementation in 2010 of a nationwide unified selection system – the SISU[5] - universities attract students from other regions and even from abroad. In the last decade, Brazil significantly improved its offer of places in the public education system, increasing the number of places in traditional universities and creating new universities in smaller towns and cities.

Through the SISU, students from all over the country can apply for places at federal universities based on a ranking system, attributed through a countrywide examination – the ENEM[6] - which facilitates university entrance and improves students' mobility across the country. In addition to the SISU and the ENEM, the

5   SISU – Unified System of Selection, or "Sistema de Seleção Unificada" (in Portuguese).
6   ENEM – An examination equivalent to SAT, attended by students finishing the high school, or "Exame Nacional do Ensino Médio" (in Portuguese).

government established a quota policy to facilitate the entry of Afro-descendants and students coming from the public education system, bringing greater diversity and new challenges for universities located in smaller towns.

Despite their merits, the new admission criteria may have undesirable consequences, by stimulating a movement away from the larger centers and towards the periphery, which can exacerbate basic education inequalities. This study compares the opinions of students enrolled in tourism courses in two universities in southern Brazil, which we shall henceforth call UNIALPHA (University Alpha) and UNIBETA (University Beta), seeking to understand how they attach themselves to the cities in general, and to the universities in particular. This work seeks to understand the students' motivations in choosing to major in tourism, and the influence of these motivations on their propensity to adopt the city and the university as their own. The study also evaluates social integration within the city, as qualified support for a sense of belonging to the university among students of tourism enrolled in the two Brazilian universities, looking for possible differences between them.

LITERATURE REVIEW

This section presents some theories about the phenomenon studied.

CAREER ATTRACTIVENESS AND CONSTRAINTS

Most of the interactions between customers and service providing personnel in the tourism and hospitality industry occur face-to-face, and the "product" is purchased and consumed simultaneously; therefore, the standard of service is paramount. "In the tourism and hospitality industry, having a skilled, enthusiastic and committed workforce is seen as vital to the success of firms in the industry" (Richardson, 2009).

Attraction competent workers for low-paying careers, like many of those in tourism and hospitality, is a challenge for companies and universities. According to Jenkins (2001), "Hospitality students need to be *au fait* with a second language and with international developments in the hospitality industry. They should be encouraged to take part in an exchange programme and undertake a period abroad." These conditions require a solid basic education and financial support.

In a recent work, Pimentel & de Paula (2014) report, regarding the expectations about the labor market, that Brazilian students indicated that besides being a well-known field of work, tourism lacks professionalism, and students show difficulties relating academic matters to the competencies required of them as professionals. According to these authors, students' expectations of the academic course were not met, and some gaps between theory and practice were quite visible. This same disparity exists in other countries, such as Australia, where "undergraduate students, studying tourism and hospitality, do not believe that the

industry offers them the attributes that they see as important in choosing a future career" (Jenkins, 2001). However, it is important to point out that despite the effect of generally unfavorable working conditions, students' willingness to study tourism, and their commitment to working in the industry after graduation, compensate for the unfavorable scenario of tourism careers (Akış-Roney & Öztin, 2007).

Besides the difficulty convincing qualified students to choose demanding professions that often pay low wages, like those in tourism and hospitality, university managers face the dilemma of retaining them for the duration of the degree program. According to Jenkins (2001), "As the degree progresses, students' desire to seek a job in the hospitality industry diminishes considerably." According to this author, through exposure to the subject and industry, students become considerably less interested in selecting hospitality as their career of first choice.

In Brazilian universities, the dilemma of attracting students to tourism courses, and retaining them, is particularly challenging, as the curricula are seen as outdated by many students. Moreover, "society, in general, sees the undergraduation in tourism as something unnecessary" (Pimentel & de Paula, 2014), despite the significant increase in the offer of tourism courses during the 1990s (Santos et al., 2015). According to Matias (2012), the education system (both public and private) increased the number of places, from 4301 in 1995 to 51,123, in 2008. However, these new places were never completely filled, and the vacancy rate became alarmingly high from 2000 onwards, reaching as high as 79% in 2009. The number of tourism courses grew during the 1990s and beginning of the 21st century, reaching 836 courses (including both bachelor and thecnological) in 2005 (Medaglia, Silveira, & Gandara, 2012). However, by 2012, the number of courses had dropped to 405 (Albuquerque, 2013).

We should also bear in mind that most activities in tourism require higher numbers of secondary level (technical) personnel for the frontline activities, and fewer professionals with high school diplomas, to work in managerial positions (Leal, 2004, p. 74). If graduating students can foresee difficulties in being hired for future positions commensurate with their level of education, then it is natural that they will lose interest in the university career path.

Choosing a career is a complex decision that can be likened to the process of buying a dress (Pukelis, 2012); usually the process starts by gathering information about the features (price, color, style, etc.) and the cost of the dress, according to personal expectations. Next, is the stage of asking for advice from experienced individuals about the dress (or in this case, the profession) and whether it is suited to the person's style and ambitions; and finally comes the decision on which dress to buy (i.e. which career to pursue). This decision is quite critical, as it has practical, psychological and financial consequences, among others: once the dress has been purchased, the person can go out in it (i.e. start working) and wear it, until circumstances require a change of dress.

Previous studies suggest that the choice of career depends on career attractiveness, students' personal values and interests, and the opinions of friends and relatives. Kim, Guo, Wang, & Agrusa (2007) identify six motivational factors

that influence students' choice of tourism as a future career: job opportunity, practical aspect, academic achievement, apparent attractiveness, interest in foreign culture, and ease of study. Additionally, they found that Chinese students value job opportunities more highly than students other countries. Moreover, Lee, Olds, & Lee (2010) found a similar structure of motivations for young people to start a career in tourism: self-fulfillment, job opportunity, attractiveness of the field, experience abroad, external influence, and ease of study.

Añaña & Nique (2010) found evidence that the choice of academic career is influenced by students' personal values. Among other evidence, they concluded that some careers are easily typified by values that students see as "the most important ones," and others by the least important. Students of business management, economics, dentistry, and medicine, for example, demonstrate self-interest because they place high importance on personal virtues like capacity and audacity, and low importance on self-transcendence; history and social science students, on the other hand, are better typified has holding values that they perceive to be less important, such as stability, conforming to norms, and making money, rather than values they cherish.

Other authors, such as Rauduvaitė & Lasauskienė (2013), acknowledge that professional choice and motivation are profoundly impacted by the student's self-evaluation and by professional expectations, value-related beliefs, emotional experiences, and professional vision. Notwithstanding these influences, the opinions of others -- parents, friends, and teachers, also have a considerable influence on professional intentions and self-determination. As Jenkins (2001) states, "As far as hospitality education is concerned, hospitality students may dissuade friends from opting for a degree in the subject, resulting in lower student numbers and possible job redundancies."

Students placement in non-metropolitan areas

Universities, in general, perform an important role in transforming and inducing changes in society. The academic environment is the ideal space to train people for skilled and specialized work, and prepare professionals for economic and social development. The offer of academic careers beyond traditional ones, or in less populated cities, like those studied in this work, is an interesting strategy for expanding higher education and promoting economic growth and employability.

Provincial universities can improve local prosperity by facilitating the emergence of local start-ups and inducing graduates to run their businesses in the regions where they have graduated (Larsson, Wennberg, Wiklund, & Wright, 2017). However, it is not easy to attract competitive students to small towns. Besides the lack of services and entertainment in smaller towns, the opportunities for entrepreneurship and employment are not as great as in the metropolitan areas, where the wages tend to be higher (Larsson et al., 2017).

University life is naturally challenging for students, as they need to adapt to the academic environment, to the local society, and to the town/city if they

have come from elsewhere. Although being at university is generally an enjoyable period in students' lives, it also a time when they face several problems common to many students, such as a lack of money, inability to adapt to the new lifestyle, and worry about getting a job after graduating (Kiraz, 2014).

Besides the adjustments needed to adapt to a new town or city, students are also faced with the low attractiveness of some courses offered by the provincial universities. Despite its advantages, the SISU (unified application system) adopted by the federal universities in Brazil has been criticized for its inability to correct regional imbalances. If we consider the high concentration of well-prepared students in the metropolitan areas, it seems natural that most of the seats offered at the main universities in traditional careers like medicine, dentistry, law, engineering, etc., will be taken first by these privileged candidates.

The remaining candidates – those whose performance is not high enough to enter via the most competitive career paths, may settle for a less preferred course of study in order to stay near their homes, or accept a place on their desired course in a smaller, provincial university. If they decide to study in the interior, these candidates may take places that could have been filled by local residents, forcing them to take courses perceived as less desirable, like those that are the focus of this study.

According to Kiraz (2014), the implementation of a unified examinations system does not correct education inequalities since "the university studied generally by the poor and the university studied intensely by the rich will not be similar in terms of equipment, content and quality" (p. 4906). For this author, "education should not be considered as different from the social structure formed by the dominant ideology determined by unequal power relations such as production and property, especially."

According to this logic, the creation of universities in remote areas, and their adherence to a national selection system, are not able to correct the existing differences among people; to the contrary, it can even deepen them. If we submit all the people of an imbalanced country, like Brazil, to the same evaluation criteria, it is hardly surprising that social differences will be reproduced within the education system, perhaps creating universities "for the rich" and universities "for the poor".

While attracting students to the provincial universities located in small towns is complicated, encouraging them to stay in these regions after graduation is also problematic, because students are often at a time of life when they are geographically mobile, and most will relocate after graduation (Larsson et al., 2017).

While some universities primarily recruit students from within the surrounding region, others attract students from all over the country. As Thomas (2012) noted, this geographical difference in recruitment strategies may make a difference when it comes to where future graduates will choose to live and work. To encourage new professionals to stay in the interior, it is imperative that universities effectively implement strategies to promote student retention, and translate these into activities that will most effectively impact students and institutional-level outcomes.

To encourage applications from the local population, some universities have created their own evaluation systems, and reserve a portion of the available places for applications from nearby schools. This is the case at UNIALPHA (one of the universities included in this study), which reserves a significant number of its annual vacancies to students registered in the PAVE[7] - a program specially designed for school leavers from within the region.

According to the argument presented in this section, the university managers are most interested in keeping the students integrated into society and involved with the university as a service provider. As Thomas (2012) observes, high drop-out rates and low levels of satisfaction may have economic, ethical, and legal implications for universities and colleges, as well as affecting their reputation, and may also bring personal and financial disadvantages for the students. For this author, the key to a successful retention strategy is a strong sense of belonging to the education provider, among all the students.

PLACE IDENTITY AND SOCIAL INTEGRATION

Two facilitating conditions for students to feel comfortable and overcome the challenges of university are the feeling of acceptance among the social groups and their peers in the city, and a sense of academic fulfilment. As mentioned earlier, the time spent at university is period full of challenges, and the bonds established with the place, and with other people, can make for a pleasant or unpleasant experience (Kiraz, 2014). Group identification is a basic cognitive process linked to the acquisition of knowledge through perception, by which the individual assumes a group's successes and failures, which in turn, entails pleasures and sufferings (Torres & Pérez-Nebra, 2004).

Sharing their problems and anxieties with a group with which they identify can help students cope better with academic difficulties. Identification is the perception of oneness with, or sense of belonging to a group, involving the direct or vicarious experience of its successes and failures (Ashforth & Mael, 1989). Identification induces the individual to engage in and derive satisfaction from activities congruent with identity, and reinforces factors conventionally associated with the group. Social identity rests on intergroup social comparisons that seek to confirm or establish ingroup-favoring evaluative distinctiveness between ingroup and outgroup, motivated by an underlying need for self-esteem (Hogg & Terry, 2000).

Place attachment, on the other hand, includes a sense of psychological well-being resulting from accessibility to a place and the extent to which an individual values and identifies with a particular environmental setting. People are "attached" to places if they share an emotional tie with it, and if they associate place-related meaning from social interactions occurring within the place (Lee, Kyle, & Scott, 2012). In other words, place attachment is the process by which humans form emotional bonds to places, or the feeling of being 'at home' in a city (Yuksel, Yuksel, & Bilim, 2010).

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7   PAVE – A model of admissions based on the tracking of the school life performance, or "Plano de Acompanhamento da Vida Escolar" (in Portuguese).

THE FEELING OF BELONGINGNESS

The need for individual belonging influences the way the subject perceives and behaves in the social environment. The appreciation of acceptance and the need to establish bonds make individuals better adapted to operate in the social environment (Gastal & Pilati, 2016)de forma que indivíduos diferem quanto à motivação pela procura de conexões sociais e o quanto valorizam ser aceitos pelas outras pessoas. A Escala de Necessidade de Pertencimento (ENP. For the purposes of this study, the definition of 'belonging' resembles the concept of student engagement, encompassing both academic and social engagement (Thomas, 2012).

Belongingness, as an indicator of social integration, "refers to the student's sense of being part of a group or place, which can be the society, neighborhood, school or family" (Cheung, Cheung, & Hue, 2017, p. 227). According to these authors, students' belongingness to the local society, school, and family is pivotal for the maintenance of societal functioning. The students' feeling of belongingness include a sense of being accepted, valued, and encouraged by teachers and peers in the classroom and the academic setting, and respect for their personal autonomy as an individual (Thomas, 2012).

Although defined as a common motivation for all human beings, the need to belong varies amongst individuals, suggesting that this phenomenon can be better understood if analyzed contingently. Some individuals are strongly motivated to maintain relationships of acceptance and belonging, and direct greater effort toward this goal, while others have a weaker motivation to maintain social connections (Gastal & Pilati, 2016). Due to the heterogeneity of the student body, institutions need to provide a wide range of opportunities to engage students in different activities to cultivate a feeling of belongingness (Thomas, 2012). Students' belongingness to society generates feedback effects and facilitates effective education and academic achievement, which is possible when the student's belongingness to the society, neighborhood, and school enhances the necessary support to facilitate their academic life (Cheung et al., 2017).

METHODS

Both of the universities involved in this work are located in provincial towns, but their history and local features are quite different. UNIALPHA is a century-old university located in a hub with 330,000 inhabitants, accessible by airplane and served by a complete structure of services and entertainment. UNIBETA, on the other hand, is a multi-site university, composed of ten small campuses located in small towns far apart from each other, along the Brazil-Uruguay border, and lacking in many services and facilities.

The subjects of this study are undergraduate students enrolled in the tourism programs of these universities. The bachelor in tourism offered by UNIALPHA is a four-year undergraduate course that prepares students for a wide range of career

paths, including entrance into master's programs; the technological degree[8] offered by UNIBETA is a two-year program that prepares students for specific activities in the tourism industry.

This work is descriptive, predominantly quantitative, and is based on primary data collected on site. UNIALPHA and UNIBETA have 165 and 113 students registered in tourism majors respectively, but not all the students were available to answer the questionnaires. The sample consisted of 136 students (77 at UNIALPHA and 59 at UNIBETA), aged 21 to 25, and the answers were collected on site, using paper-and-pencil questionnaires, directly in the classrooms. Prior to the data collection, the questionnaire was submitted to two UNIBETA students to check that it was appropriate, and easy to understand. The questionnaire included demographic questions about the students' personal profile, place of birth, route of admission, main reasons for choosing the university and the major, and questions regarding the sense of belonging to the university and to the host town/city. Data referring to the constructs (Table 1) were gathered using a 7-point Likert-type scale ranging from "extremely likely" to "not at all likely."

The reasons for choosing the major and the university (INF1-INF10) were based on Soares (2002), Santos (2005), Rots & Aelterman (2009), Mondini, Mondini, Borges, & Domingues (2014), De Faria, Weber, & Ton (2012). The questions concerning the social connection to the place (LL1-LL4) were adapted from Yuksel, Yuksel, & Bilim (2010), and those regarding the sense of belonging to the university (AE1-AE6) were adapted from Jang, Kim, & Lee (2015). The codes used for the variables ("INF," "LL," and "AE") were derived from the instrument in Portuguese, and were kept as per the originals to facilitate the analysis.

As a preliminary step for the model analysis, an exploratory factor analysis within the CFA framework (E/CFA) was performed to check for possible "factors of motivation." "Although underutilized in the applied literature, the E/CFA can be a useful precursor to CFA that allows the researcher to explore measurement structures more fully before moving into a confirmatory framework" (Brown, 2006, p. 193). The result of this preparatory step suggested that the motivations for choosing the major in tourism (INF1-INF10) could be better arranged in three factors: convenience, external influences, and university attractiveness. The E/CFA and the structural model were analyzed by Smart-PLS-3 (Ringle, Wende, & Becker, 2015), due to the suitability of this software to deal with small sample sizes and non-normal data (Hair, Sarstedt, Hopkins, & Kuppelwieser, 2014).

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8   A two-year university career, such as an associate degree, which trains students to work in specific areas of the tourism industry.

Table 1: Items included in the questionnaire

Code	Questions
INF1	Professional vocation
INF2	Friends' opinion
INF3	Family members' opinion
INF4	Good employability
INF5	Because it is a night course
INF6	Because it is a short course
INF7	Quality of the course
INF8	Easy of entry
INF9	Career reputation
INF10	University location (proximity, easy access)
LL1	People in the city help to enhance my life and academic experience.
LL2	The contacts I establish/maintain with people in the region are important to me.
LL3	I would regret it if I had to leave town and lose contact with these people.
LL4	I have special relationships with the city, the region, and people.
AE1	I feel that the university is part of me.
AE2	I identify with the university.
AE3	Studying at this university says a lot about who I am.
AE4	I feel very connected emotionally to my university.
AE5	I have a strong sense of belonging to the university.
AE6	The university means a lot to me.

RESULTS

A preliminary analysis performed on the secondary data gathered from the boards of the universities in relation to the facilities available and the academic features indicates that UNIALPHA may be more attractive in terms of location, accessibility, entertainment, accommodation, and services. However, these advantages do not necessarily translate into attractiveness of the institution. As we can see in Table 2, despite UNIALPHA having better regional and organizational resources, the occupancy rate of its tourism course is 72.4%, while that of UNIBETA is around 96%.

Table 2: Available Facilities and University Features

Features	UNIALPHA	UNIBETA
Accessible by airplane	yes	no
Admission criteria	SISU + PAVE	SISU
Annual fee	free	free
City population	330,000	30,000
Dinner service	convenient	limited
Distance from the nearest capital	250 km	400 km
Degree granted	bachelor	technological*
Number of places occupied	165	113
Number of places vacant	63	05
Course occupancy rate	72.4%	95.8%
Program duration	9 semesters	5 semesters
Social and nightlife	attractive	Limited
University housing	limited	very limited

* 2-year degree, similar to an associate in Tourism.

A total sample of 136 students (33.8% male and 66.2% female) were questioned by the researchers; 77 at UNIALPHA and 59 at UNIBETA. As shown at Table 3, most of the undergraduate students enrolled at UNIALPHA (61%) had been ranked by PAVE or entered by Quotas (two of the less competitive systems), and only 39% had competed for their places via SISU (the free competition system). At UNIBETA, on the other hand, only 29% of students had been admitted by Quotas, and 71% had entered by the universal system.
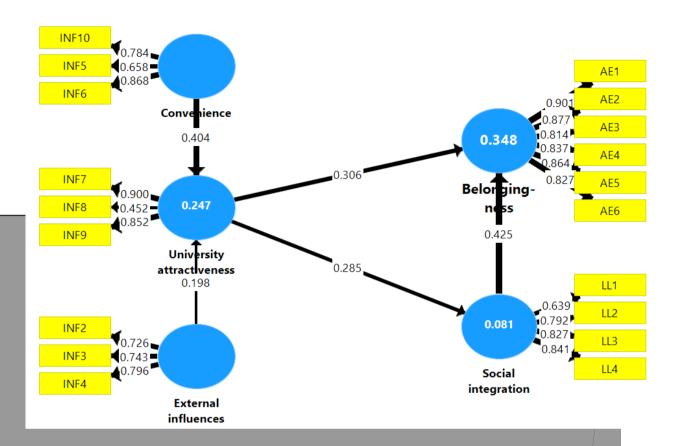
Table 3: Sample Characteristics

HEI			Selection Criteria			Total
	SISU PAVE Quotas					
UNIALPHA	Sex	Female Count	23	14	21	58
		Female % within Sex	40%	24%	36%	100%
		Male Count	7	5	7	19
		Male % within Sex	37%	26%	37%	100%
	Total	Count		30	19	28
	% within Sex		39%	25%	36%	
UNIBETA	Sex	Female Count	21	-	11	32
		Female % within Sex	66%	-	34%	100%
		Male Count	21	-	6	27
		Male % within Sex	78%	-	22%	100%
	Total	Count		42	-	17
	% within Sex		71%	-	29%	

The results confirmed that the motivations to choose tourism as a major influence the sense of academic belongingness and social integration with people in the city. As shown in Figure 1, the attractiveness of the university directly influences the sense of being part of both the local society and the university. Moreover, the social integration into the society in the city is a condition that promotes the sense of the academic belongingness.

Figure 1: Structural model

The results also confirmed that for the students, the chance to attend a higher education program in their own city, at a convenient time, was the most important driver of university attractiveness. All the factors showed acceptable indices of reliability and AVE (Table 4). Three factors showed Cronbach's Alphas that were somewhat lower than 0.7 but were nonetheless considered reliable based on the composite reliability, a measure that provides a more appropriate measure of internal consistency (Hair et al., 2014). All the structural relationships (the inner model) were significant (p < 0.01).

Table 4: Factors' Reliability

Factors	Cronbach's Alpha	Rho A	Composite Reliability	Average Variance Extracted (AVE)	
Belongingness	0.925	0.928	0.942	0.729	
Convenience	0.677	0.749	0.817	0.600	
External influences	0.643	0.661	0.799	0.571	
Social integration	0.781	0.799	0.859	0.607	
University attractiveness	0.645	0.808	0.794	0.580	

The discriminant validity was assessed by Fornell and Larcker criterion (Hair et al., 2014), which compares the variance of every construct with the correlations of its indicators with other constructs. To test this requirement, the AVE of each construct should be higher than the highest squared correlation of any other construct. As we can see by comparing the constructs' correlations with the square roots of the AVE (in the main diagonal) in Table 5, all the constructs meet the Fornell and Larcker criterion. Convergent validity was assumed based on the AVE being higher than 0.50.

Table 5: Discriminant validity

Factors	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
Belongingness (1)	0.854				
Convenience (2)	0.155	0.775			
External influences (3)	0.260	0.280	0.756		
Social integration (4)	0.512	0.131	0.205	0.779	
University attractiveness (5)	0.427	0.460	0.311	0.285	0.762

Besides directly influencing the following dimension, some conditioning factors also influence downstream dimensions, by transferring part of their loadings onto them. Convenience of the course, for example, besides being the most qualified supporter for university attractiveness, also transfers part of its load (through university attractiveness) to belongingness (0.173) and to social integration (0.115). A complete list of indirect effects detected is shown in Table 6.

Table 6: Significance of indirect relationships

Total Indirect Effects	Original Sample	T Statistics	P Values
Convenience -> Belongingness	0.173	4.061	0.000
Convenience -> Social integration	0.115	2.866	0.004
External influences -> Belongingness	0.084	2.313	0.021
External influences -> Social integration	0.056	1.951	0.052
University attractiveness -> Belongingness	0.121	2.984	0.003

One of the objectives of this work was to compare the two groups of respondents, looking for possible differences between the universities. To compare the performance of the universities, all five factors were transformed in manifest variables by means of their indicators, and the universities were compared to each other. The results showed that in the three factors representing the motivations for choosing the course (convenience, external influences, and university attractiveness), the students' perceptions differed significantly ($P < 0.05$) between the two universities. The results of the tests of mean differences between the universities are listed in Table 7.

Table 7: Mean differences of the factors ANOVA test

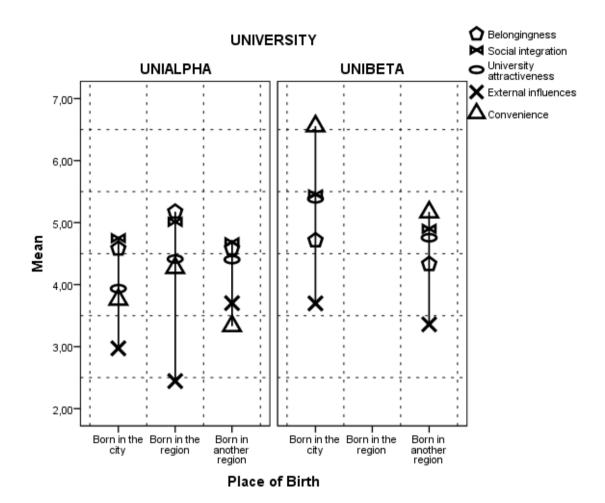| ANOVA Table		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
External influences	(Between Universities)	9.659	1	9.659	4.032	0.047
Belongingness	(Between Universities)	1.336	1	1.336	0.540	0.464
Social integration	(Between Universities)	5.435	1	5.435	2.678	0.104
University attractiveness	(Between Universities)	28.30	1	28.30	13.86	0.000
Convenience	(Between Universities)	153.4	1	153.4	66.46	0.000

For all three factors in which significant differences were identified, UNIALPHA scored lower than UNIBETA. The mean score for convenience was 3.81 for the UNIALPHA students and 5.94 for the UNIBETA students (a difference Sig = 0.00). The external influences for students to choose tourism as a major scored 3.00 at UNIALPHA and 3.55 at UNIBETA (a difference Sig = 0.04); and the attractiveness of UNIALPHA (4.20) was almost one point lower than that of UNIBETA (5.11) (difference Sig = 0.00).

Given that the universities adopt different admission policies, possible differences in opinions regarding local and non-local students were also tested. This assessment was important for evaluating two factors which, in theory, should favor the local residents more than the non-local ones: sense of social integration, and convenience. Surprisingly, few differences were found. In UNIALPHA, a sole significant difference found was the influence of others when choosing to major in tourism was higher among students coming from out-of-area than among those born in the region (Sig=0.025). Furthermore, at UNIBETA, local students evaluated the university attractiveness and convenience more highly than those coming from outside the region (Sig=0.09 and Sig=0.00). In Figure 2, we see that at UNIALPHA, the most visible difference occurs in the external influences (the 'X' mark) between people born in the region and those coming from other places. At UNIBETA, conversely, the differences in convenience, social integration, and

university attractiveness were visibly higher for those born in the city than for those coming from other places.

Figure 2: Means of the factors between the universities

CONCLUSION

This study analyses the influence of motivations for studying tourism in two public universities in southern Brazil, the relationships between these motivations, and the sense of belonging to the universities and to the towns/cities where they are located. A total of 136 undergraduate students majoring in tourism were surveyed directly on site, by the researchers: 77 enrolled on the UNIALPHA bachelor program, and 59 taking the technologist degree at UNIBETA.

The results revealed three groups of variables as the strongest motivators for choosing to major in tourism at the two universities: ease of entrance, quality, and the reputation of the program of study. The results also suggested that the influences of family and friends had influenced the choice, but the primary motivation was convenience (the possibility of attending in the evenings, and remaining in one's hometown). The results confirmed that program attractiveness influences the sense

of belongingness to the university and to the town/city at large.

This work offers academic and managerial contributions. From the academic point of view, it advances the theory, by analyzing and testing the influence of the academic environment and students' integration into the social structure of the host city, in the sense of the belonging construct (Kiraz, 2014). By confirming that university attractiveness favors both the sense of integration into the host community and the sense of belonging to the university, the work contributes to the understanding of these important constructs and raises new possibilities for research on university drop-out rates, particularly for universities located in the small towns. This result expands the concerns and responsibilities of those seeking to promote a greater sense of engagement, since the well-being of students depends on both the academic and social environments.

From the managerial perspective, this work provides evidence that the social welcome received is a vital vector of belonging, and this can be essential for both the academics and the managers in general, within the cities that host federal universities. The results indicate that the feeling of being welcomed does not come from the university alone; the possibility of retaining students after graduation derives fundamentally from their integration into the social fabric of the host city.

Further studies are necessary, both to evaluate the reliability of the constructs employed and to validate the relationships identified. The present work shows compelling evidence that feeling welcomed by the university and by the community at large significantly influences students' sense of belonging, resulting in lower drop-out rates. However, it should be kept in mind that this study used a small sample from only two universities, therefore, the results cannot be generalized to contexts other than the one studied here.

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