

# Medieval fair of torre de moncorvo – visitor's perspective

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## Abstract

*The Medieval Fair of Torre de Moncorvo, located in the north of Portugal, has several editions since 2011, and its historical context is associated with D. Dinis and iron. This event stands out from other medieval fairs for the involvement of the local population. Thus, the present study aimed to analyze the profile of the Medieval Fair visitor, considering the following objectives: identify the visitor profile; determine visitor motivations; assess the level of visitor satisfaction; analyze visitor behavioral intentions. A quantitative methodology was adopted with the application of a questionnaire survey to visitors of the fair. The questionnaire was applied in two formats, on paper and online, obtaining 300 responses. A factor analysis was also performed, where three motivational factors and one attraction factor were found. Based on the factors identified, it can be concluded that visitors to the Medieval Fair of Torre de Moncorvo are attracted to this event for cultural reasons, seeking to relax and socialize, and are willing to recommend the municipality and the event, and return at the next opportunity. The results of the study can help the organization of the event to adjust the next editions of the fair to the profile of the visitor.*

## Keywords

medieval fair • visitor profile • visitor motivations • visitor satisfaction • visitor behavioral intentions

## 1. Introduction

Visitors to a territory actively seek experiences by combining various factors such as nature, cultural elements, local traditions, among others (Charters, 2006; Kim et al., 2016). Events as space-time phenomena, due to their authenticity and unique character, provide visitors with the opportunity to participate for a full enjoyment of experiences (Getz, 2008). Medieval fairs as historical re-enactment events allow destinations to promote their cultural heritage (Fu et al., 2018) and building relationships between the visited community and the visiting community. The purpose of medieval fairs is to establish a link between the past and the present and to portray everyday life (Brædder et al., 2017). For destination management, understanding the reasons that attract visitors to this type of events and knowing their profile, in order to segment the market, becomes strategic for future decision-making.


The Medieval Fair of Torre de Moncorvo is held in the municipality of Torre de Moncorvo, in the north of Portugal, and is the anchor event of the municipality attracts in every

edition thousands of local and national visitors. Thus, considering the lack of studies, the present research has as main objective to analyze the profile of the visitor of the Medieval Fair of Torre de Moncorvo. A quantitative methodology was chosen, with the application of a questionnaire survey to visitors to the 9th edition of the fair, which took place on April 8th, 9th, and 10th, 2023. The questionnaire was made available in two formats, in paper format and in digital format in the Official Store of the Medieval Fair. Identifying visitors considering their sociodemographic profile, visit indicators, motivations, degree of satisfaction and behavioral intention is something innovative for the event organization. For the municipality of Torre de Moncorvo this study is a cornerstone for strategic decision-making for future editions of the fair. The paper is structured, in addition to this introduction, in the literature review and the framework of the medieval fair. This is followed by the methodology, the presentation of the results and some conclusions.

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## 2. Literature review

### 2.1. Cultural tourism and cultural events

The World Tourism Organization adopted the definition of Cultural Tourism like

A type of tourism activity in which the visitor's essential motivation is to learn, discover, experience and consume the tangible and intangible cultural attractions/products in a tourism destination. These attractions/products relate to a set of distinctive material, intellectual, spiritual and emotional features of a society that encompasses arts and architecture, historical and cultural heritage, culinary heritage, literature, music, creative industries and the living cultures with their lifestyles, value systems, beliefs and traditions. (UNWTO, 2017, p.18).

Recent decades have seen an increase in the use of culture and creativity to market tourist destinations, as culture has come to be seen as a resource that enables the creation of differentiated content and in turn offers new opportunities for cultural institutions and products (Quinteiro et al., 2020). According to Dominguez (2012), tourists perform a cultural activity that can be understood as the interest in objects and ways of life of other people and other cultures. Cultural tourism, therefore, can be understood as a way of personal enrichment and of expanding knowledge about other cultures. The UNWTO Report on Tourism and Culture Sinergies (2018) presented the different approaches to culture: i) culture 1.0/cultural tourism 1.0 (Grand Tour and consumption by a small elite); ii) culture 2.0/cultural tourism 2.0 (culture as industry and mass cultural tourism); iii) culture 3.0/cultural tourism 3.0 (culture as a platform for tourism and vice versa, as well as a means of creating identity). These changes stimulating social cohesion and supporting creativity (UNWTO, 2018). The culture associated with traditions must maintain its originality and authenticity, the latter being considered a key factor in cultural and heritage tourism (Barreto, 2007; Domínguez-Quintero et al., 2019). In this line of thought, cultural events allow the recreation and recovery of culture and traditions, strengthening the territorial identity and giving an authentic experience to visitors (Boucher et al., 2018; Getz & Page, 2016; Gomes & Devile, 2017). To Richards and Palmer (2010), territories are increasingly developing cultural events to celebrate local history and culture, such as medieval fair. Rashid et al. (2017, p.11) state that "the main purpose of cultural events is the celebration or confirmation of culture".

### 2.2. Cultural tourist

For Figini and Vici (2012) the cultural tourist visits sites and participates in cultural events that contribute to their personal enhancement. According to these authors, this

type of tourist shows a concern with the preservation of cultural heritage and the local community they visit, seeking more authentic experiences with low environmental impact, and therefore sustainability has become one of the main concerns of the cultural tourist who increasingly seeks to minimize the negative impacts of tourism. Visitors who seek the authenticity of the territories experience the local culture (Ferreira, 2018). These experiences provide knowledge and contact with ancestral ways of life, valuing the local culture (Amaral, 2019). According to Gregori et al. (2019), cultural tourists seek to learn about and engage with new cultures, history, art, architecture, local traditions, and have a high level of education and income. They are demanding in terms of the quality of the cultural services and products they consume, and travel alone or in small groups. They spend more time in each destination they visit than other types of tourists. This type of tourist is concerned with preserving the cultural heritage and the local community they visit, looking for more authentic experiences with a low impact on the environment and society. Sustainability has therefore become one of the main concerns of cultural tourists, who are increasingly seeking to minimize the negative impacts of tourism. The cultural tourist travels out of season and is likely to spend more money compared to other types of tourists (Vergori & Arima, 2020). From the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO, 2019, p. 30) in the cultural tourism "...the visitor's essential motivation is to learn, discover, experience and consume the tangible and intangible cultural attractions/products in a tourism destination".

## 3. Methodology

The aim of the present study is to provide structured information on the characterization of the profile of visitors to Medieval fair of Torre de Moncorvo. The following specific objectives have also been defined: i) Identify the visitor profile; ii) Determine visitor motivations; iii) Assess the level of visitor satisfaction; iv) Analyze visitor behavioral intentions.

Torre de Moncorvo is a municipality in the north of Portugal, with medieval roots dating back to the 13th century. The municipality was originally known as Santa Cruz da Vilarça and was granted a charter by King Dinis in 1285. The king also endowed the town with a castle and walls. Later, in 1319, he issued the Charter of Feira, which facilitated the economic development and settlement of the region.

In order to recreate what a medieval market would be like, the Medieval Fair was organized and promoted by the Torre de Moncorvo School Group in 2011, with the support of the Municipality. That year the fair only ran for one day and in 2014 it was taken over by the municipality and became an annual event lasting three days. Since then, all editions are

associated with a theme that always has as its pillar D. Dinis and iron because Torre de Moncorvo has the largest open-air iron deposit in Europe, explored since Roman times. In 2015 it established itself in the panorama of medieval fairs in the country. In 2022, the 9th edition of the Medieval Fair was held with the theme “Trovas de D’El Rei D. Dinis na Terra do Ferro”. In this edition there were 10 partner entities, 23 entertainment groups and about 90 exhibitors among them artisans, merchants, mystics and taverns that during the three days sell the products of the season and also the endogenous products of the municipality (CMTM, 2022). The great involvement and active participation of traders and the resident population during the course of this event became a differentiating factor compared to the others (CMTM, 2023). This fair is held in April to commemorate the charter granted to the county by King Dinis in April 1285.

Following the work by Barbeitos *et al.* (2014), one of the objectives is to analyze how three exogenous latent variables (Novelty and Cultural Exploration, Socialization, and relaxation) affect the endogenous latent variable (overall satisfaction with the event). We have retained the a partial set of hypotheses from Barbeitos *et al.* (2014), which are now applied to the Feira Medieval de Torre de Moncorvo, as follows:

H1: Visitor motivation positively influences overall satisfaction with the event experience.

H1a: Novelty and cultural exploration positively influence overall satisfaction with the event experience.

H1b: Socialization positively influences overall satisfaction with the event experience.

H1c: Relaxation positively influences overall satisfaction with the event experience.

This study utilized a survey methodology, employing a self-administered questionnaire. The target population consisted of visitors attending the Torre de Moncorvo Medieval Fair. The sample comprised 300 valid responses, collected through convenience sampling. To ensure the validity of the instrument, a pre-test was conducted with a sample of 12 individuals. The questionnaire was made available at the Official Shop of the Medieval Fair of Torre de Moncorvo during the 2022 edition, which took place on April 8th, 9th, and 10th. It was provided in paper format and accessible through QR codes, a link, and with the participant’s informed consent at the Medieval Fair, where they provided their email contact to later receive access to the questionnaire link.

The questionnaire consisted of five sections aimed at measuring various aspects, including socio-demographic characteristics, visitation characteristics, a general analysis of the Medieval Fair experience, evaluation of the respondents’ satisfaction with the Medieval Fair, and their intention to

recommend and revisit Torre de Moncorvo municipality and the Medieval Fair. To assess visitor motivation, we utilized a Likert scale of importance that was used for medieval fairs by Barbeitos *et al.* (2014).

In the initial stage of the analysis, the data underwent careful examination to identify missing values and outliers. Jamovi version 19 was employed to construct visitor profiles for the Torre de Moncorvo Medieval Fair. Two methods of data analysis were utilized: univariate and multivariate. Univariate analysis was used to describe and summarize the data using measures of central tendency. Multivariate analysis was employed to identify patterns and relationships among variables, including factor analysis.

## 4. Results and discussion

### 4.1 Sociodemographic profile

Regarding the sociodemographic profile of the Medieval Fair visitors, 59.7% are female and 74.7% are between 18 and 44 years old. More than 60% of the respondents have a high school degree, and 32.7% have a college education. More than 64% are employees and have a household monthly net income between 1001€ and 2000€. Almost half of the respondents (47.3%) live in the municipality of Torre de Moncorvo and of the non-residents (52.7%), 17% live in Bragança district, 10.3% in Porto district and 6% in Viseu district. Of the visitors living abroad (3.2%), 60% live in France and Spain.

### 4.2 Visitor Characteristics and Satisfaction at the Torre de Moncorvo Medieval Fair

As for the characterization of the visit, 73.3% of the respondents have the habit of participating in events of the same nature and approximately 91% claim to have already visited previous editions of the Torre de Moncorvo Medieval Fair. Most respondents who do not live in the municipality where the event takes place (58.2%) stay in the municipality of Torre de Moncorvo and choose the house of relatives and friends as their accommodation (55.4%), and 21.7% of respondents decide to stay in lodging units (local accommodation and rural tourism). The respondents were accompanied by friends (65%), partner (46%), other family members and children (39.7 and 33%, respectively).

Of the non-residents in Torre de Moncorvo, more than half of the respondents (65.2%) stated that the main reason for visiting the municipality was the Medieval Fair. Of those who answered negatively to the previous question, 73.3% point to visiting friends and/or family as the main reason.

As far as the number of times the respondent has already participated in the Torre de Moncorvo fair, most of them are revisitants. Of the respondents, 30.6%, corresponding to 83

people, participated in all editions of the Medieval Fair. Of the people who visited the medieval fair more than five times, 84% are residents of Torre de Moncorvo municipality. It is worth mentioning that of the residents from other municipalities in Portugal and abroad, 74% have visited the Medieval Fair at least twice.

Analyzing the main sources of information consulted, we highlight the social networks, the municipality's website, and the recommendation of relatives and/or friends (word of mouth). It can be concluded that the organization of the event should continue to invest in the dissemination and promotion of this event through digital media and also in the quality of the event so that the satisfaction of the participants is high and thus be able to recommend the visit to other people.

An analysis was made of the degree of importance attributed to the motivations, for visitors to the Medieval Fair. The question was designed according to a five-point Likert-type importance

scale (1. not at all important, 2. not very important, 3. indifferent, 4. important and 5. very important) and composed of a set of 10 items. It was defined that less than three is at most "not very important", equal to three "indifferent", and greater than three is at least "important". It can be concluded that "enjoying this type of events", "enjoying new experiences and cultures", "finding new things", "a valuable experience" and "relax" are the main motivations that lead visitors to participate in the Medieval Fair (Table 1).

The most purchased products at the Medieval Fair were handicrafts (44.3%), Torre de Moncorvo's covered almonds (40%) and wine (35%). Of the 9% of "other products" purchased are caramelized sunflower seeds, bread, crepes, handmade chocolate, among others. When asked about the purchase of products outside the Medieval Fair site, 88.6% answered that they didn't purchase products outside the site, and 11.4% said they did purchase, namely food products (43.8%) and wine (20.6%).

**Table 1.** Motivations

Motivations	N	Less than three (%)	Equal to three (%)	Greater than three (%)	Mean	Standard Deviation ±
Enjoying this type of events	300	1,7	11,3	<b>87</b>	4,45	0,797
Enjoying new experiences and cultures	300	3	9,7	<b>87,3</b>	4,42	0,836
Finding new things	300	4,3	14,7	<b>81</b>	4,25	0,908
A valuable experience for me	300	3,7	16,7	<b>79,7</b>	4,23	0,89
These types of events contribute to my relaxation	300	4,3	14,3	<b>81,3</b>	4,23	0,921
These types of events changes my routine	300	6	19,7	74,4	4,13	1
Increase my knowledge about history region	299	5,7	21,4	72,9	4,09	0,979
Slow down my life	299	12,4	21,7	65,9	3,86	1,16
Make new frends during the event	300	14,3	25	60,7	3,75	1,19
Meet people with similar interests	300	16	23,3	60,7	3,7	1,19

Source: Authors construction.

**Table 2.** Attractions

N=280	Less than three (%)	Equal to three (%)	Greater than three (%)	Mean	Standard Deviation ±
Gastronomy	1,5	7,5	<b>91,1</b>	4,52	0,713
Event organization	1,4	8,6	<b>90</b>	4,48	0,743
Handicraft	1,8	6,1	<b>92,2</b>	4,47	0,708
Supply and diversity of activities	1,8	10,4	87,9	4,43	0,777
Security	3,2	8,9	87,8	4,43	0,927
Event program	2,5	9,3	88,2	4,42	0,791
Event infrastructure	1,8	12,9	85,3	4,39	0,805
Available information	2,8	15,4	81,8	4,26	0,846
Event signage	7,2	13,9	78,9	4,16	0,955
Prices	7,5	17,9	74,6	4,04	0,988
Parking	27,9	26,4	45,7	3,31	1,31

Source: Authors construction.

Regarding the degree of satisfaction of the experience during the Medieval Fair, 11 attractions were evaluated by applying a Likert-type satisfaction scale on a five-point scale (1. not at all satisfied, 2. not very satisfied, 3. satisfied, 4. quite satisfied, and 5. very satisfied). It was considered, less than three is at most “not very satisfied”, equal to three “satisfied” and greater than three is at least “quite satisfied”.

In general, respondents showed great satisfaction with their experience during the event, however, the least satisfactory aspect was the parking lot. This may be due to the fact that there are few parking spaces relatively close to the site where the Medieval Fair takes place for the affluence that has been registered throughout the editions. Gastronomy, event organization and handicraft, deserve to be highlighted because they are the ones that present a higher degree of satisfaction from the respondents (Table 2).

#### 4.3 Evaluation of the visit and behavioral intent

It appears that the respondents are generally satisfied with their visit, since the average response is 4.71 with a standard deviation of 0.540. As for visitors' behavioral intention, it was assessed using a Likert-type scale from 1 to 5 (1. strongly disagree, 2. disagree, 3. indifferent, 4. agree, and 5. strongly agree). Relatively to the municipality of Torre de Moncorvo and the Medieval Fair, the respondents show a high degree of agreement, more than 4.5. Visitors recommend Torre de Moncorvo to others and would like to return in the near future. Revisiting is an important aspect because it demonstrates loyalty of the respondents.

Analyzing the behavioral intention towards the Medieval Fair the average of answers responses in all items presented is higher than 4.8. With a similar analysis to the previous question, most respondents recommend a visit to the Medieval Fair and show a revisit behavior towards the

event, which justifies the high response rate of participants in previous editions of the Medieval Fair of Torre de Moncorvo.

The respondents were asked to describe the Medieval Fair and the municipality of Torre de Moncorvo in three words. The words most associated with this event were fun, culture, joyful, history, animation, unique. The words that stand out most in the description of the municipality are: welcoming; beautiful; landscape; gastronomy; nature; culture, among others. It should be noted that the words associated with the event and the region are positive.

#### 4.4 Factorial Analysis

The principal component analysis was performed and rotated using the varimax procedure (Table 3). As previously reported by Barbeitos *et al.* (2014) in their study, three factors were identified and named as “Novelty and cultural exploration,” “Relaxation,” and “Socialization.”

The first factor, “Novelty and cultural exploration,” carries the most significant weight, explaining 34.2% of the data structure. It encompasses five motivations associated with cultural exploration, such as enjoying new experiences and cultures, discovering new things, and increasing knowledge about the region's history.

The third and final factor groups two motivations related to socialization, namely making new friends during the event and meeting people with similar interests. This factor explains 21.1% of the data.

The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) test, used to assess the sampling adequacy, obtained a score of 0.869. The Bartlett's test of sphericity was found to be significant ( $p$  - value < 0,1%). The three factors together explain 77.8% of the total variance, and the Cronbach's Alpha for each factor indicates an acceptable level of internal consistency.

**Table 3.** Factorial Analysis – Motivational Factors

Indicators and Motivational Factors	Communalities	Explained Variance (%)	Cronbach's Alpha
<b>Factor 1: Novelty and cultural exploration</b>		<b>34,2</b>	<b>0,899</b>
Enjoying new experiences and cultures	0,876		
Finding new things	0,822		
A valuable experience for me	0,790		
Enjoying this type of events	0,777		
Increase my knowledge about history region	0,657		
<b>Factor 2: Relaxation</b>		<b>22,4</b>	<b>0,817</b>
Slow down my life	0,856		
These types of events changes my routine	0,844		
These types of events contribute to my relaxation	0,671		
<b>Factor 3: Socialization</b>		<b>21,1</b>	<b>0,912</b>
Meet people with similar interests	0,892		
Make new frends during the event	0,886		

Based on the identified factors, it can be concluded that visitors to the Medieval Fair of Torre de Moncorvo are attracted to this event for cultural reasons, seeking relaxation and socialization.

Regarding the satisfaction attribute, the results of the principal component analysis after varimax rotation on the indicators associated with satisfaction of the attraction factors at the Medieval Fair are presented in Table 4. The KMO test, which evaluates the adequacy of the sample, yielded a score of 0.938, surpassing the recommended value of 0.60 for a valid analysis. The Bartlett's test of sphericity indicated significance ( $p$  - value < 0,1%).

From this analysis, only one component, or factor, emerged. This factor accounts for 66.3% of the total variance, and the Cronbach's Alpha is 0.937, signifying a high level of internal consistency.

In the evaluation of "Event Satisfaction," key factors with high communalities values significantly impact visitor contentment:

- Event Organization (Communalities: 0.892) - Efficient event management strongly influences visitor satisfaction, emphasizing the importance of well-organized logistics.

- Supply and Diversity of Activities (Communalities: 0.884) - Providing a wide range of engaging activities is essential, as visitors highly value diverse entertainment options.
- Event Program (Communalities: 0.881) - A well-structured and appealing program contributes positively to overall satisfaction.

Conversely, factors with lower communalities values, such as Parking (Communalities: 0.583), have a weaker influence on visitor contentment, indicating areas for potential improvement. These insights guide event organizers in enhancing visitor experiences.

Pearson's correlation coefficient was computed to validate the study hypotheses by examining the relationship between the dimensions and event satisfaction. Analyzing Table 5, it becomes evident that all obtained correlations are positive and significant at the 1% level, providing confirmation for all research hypotheses. Consequently, it can be concluded that all components exert a positive influence on the event satisfaction score, with particular emphasis on the "Novelty and cultural exploration" component.

**Table 4.** Factorial Analysis – Attraction Factor

Indicators and Attraction Factor	Communalities	Explained Variance (%)	Cronbach's Alpha
<b>Factor 1: Event Satisfaction</b>		<b>66,3</b>	<b>0,937</b>
Event organization	0,892		
Supply and diversity of activities	0,884		
Event program	0,881		
Event infrastructure	0,855		
Available information	0,851		
Security	0,843		
Gastronomy	0,819		
Handicraft	0,818		
Event signage	0,778		
Prices	0,700		
Parking	0,583		

## 5. Conclusions

The Torre de Moncorvo medieval fair stands out from others due to the strong involvement of the local community. Events can significantly contribute to the development of a tourist destination by increasing visitor flow and addressing seasonality, leading to a positive economic impact on the local community. Additionally, they can serve as a complement to a destination's existing offerings, reflecting the tradition and history of the area and creating new opportunities for visitors to experience different aspects of the local culture. Well-executed events can foster a sense of pride and cultural identity in the local population, particularly when they actively participate in organizing and carrying out the events.

In response to the specific research objectives, the first objective - identify the visitor profile, shows the following results about sociodemographic profile: 59.7% are female and 74.7% are between 18 and 44 years old; high school degree (more than 60%); employees and household monthly net income between 1001€ and 2000€; 47.3% live in the

**Table 5.** Dimensions and Event satisfaction

	Novelty and cultural exploration	Relaxation	Socialization	Satisfaction with the event
<b>Novelty and cultural exploration</b>	-			
<b>Relaxation</b>	0,555*	-		
<b>Socialization</b>	0,542*	0,513*	-	
<b>Satisfaction with the event</b>	0,659*	0,476*	0,406*	-

\*value of  $p$  < 1%.



municipality of Torre de Moncorvo; 60% of the foreign visitors live in France and Spain. The visitor who has already visited the fair in other editions (approximately 91%), 58.2% didn't live in the municipality and choose as accommodation the house of relatives and friends (55.4%). Friends and partner are your travel group (65% and 46%, respectively). The Medieval Fair is the main reason for visiting the municipality (65.2%). The social networks, the municipality's website and the recommendation of relatives and/or friends are the main sources of information consulted.

Regarding the second objective - determine visitor motivations, "enjoying this type of events", "enjoying new experiences and cultures", "finding new things", "a valuable experience" and "relax" are the main motivations for visitors participated in the Medieval Fair. The principal component analysis reveals three groups of factors, as previously reported by Barbeitos *et al.* (2014), that motivate visitor travel and participation in the Feira Medieval de Torre de Moncorvo: Novelty and Cultural Exploration, Relaxation, and Socialization. Among these, Novelty and Cultural Exploration emerge as the most relevant factors for visitors seeking new experiences related to local traditions and culture. The second most significant factor is Relaxation, catering to visitors looking to unwind and escape from their daily routines.

For the third objective - assess the level of visitor satisfaction, it was concluded that Novelty and Cultural Exploration, Relaxation, and Socialization have a positive impact on event satisfaction. The most important component for event satisfaction is Novelty and Cultural Exploration. The respondents were very satisfied with the event, however, the least satisfactory aspect was parking.

In response to the fourth specific objective - analyze visitor behavioral intentions, the vast majority of respondents recommend a visit to the Medieval Fair and show a revisit behavior towards the event. The positive emotional association with this event were fun, culture, joyful, history, animation, unique.

All the hypotheses applied to this study were validated, that is motivations such as novelty and cultural exploration, socialization and relaxation, positively influence overall satisfaction with the event experience.

Based on the information obtained in this study, event organizers can adjust the program, as well as the services offered during the course of the event, to meet the specific expectations of visitors. In this way, the organization can ensure that visitors have an experience more in line with their expectations, increasing overall satisfaction and the success of the event.

One of the main limitations is associated with the data collection method, that is, the questionnaire survey, as there was little receptivity from some visitors to respond to the questionnaire, even though it was made available in various

formats (paper, QR code, link). In view of this limitation, future researchers are advised to use another strategy to increase the response rate, which could involve offering incentives such as a discount on products and/or a gift.

For future lines of research, it would be valuable to assess the resident population's perception of this event in order to identify its social, economic and cultural impact on the community. This information can help the event organizers deal with the impacts of the event more effectively for the benefit of both the sending and receiving communities.

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