Luxury tourism from the traditional perspective to the sustainable trigger: Redefining new luxury tourism

VASCO RIBEIRO SANTOS * [vasco-rs@hotmail.com]

MANUEL AU-YONG-OLIVEIRA ** [mao@ua.pt]

MARIA JOSÉ SOUSA *** [maria.jose.sousa@iscte-iul.pt]

CARLOS COSTA **** [ccosta@ua.pt]

Abstract | This study analyses and explores the origins of the concept of luxury tourism and its ongoing evolution. A focus group was chosen as the field research method to collect primary data in order to explore and discuss the redefinition of new luxury tourism from different complementary perspectives. The central outcomes indicate that the concept of luxury tourism has changed over time. In recent years it has advanced more towards sustainability, and is perceived differently according to cultural characteristics, perspectives and contexts, depending on the type and profile of the tourist. The main implications and suggestions for future advances and directions are discussed, and closing remarks related to sustainable luxury tourism post-COVID-19 are provided.

Keywords | Luxury tourism, sustainable luxury tourism, focus group

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* DEGEIT, Universidade de Aveiro, Aveiro, Portugal; CiTUR, Politécnico de Leiria, Leiria, Portugal; ISLA Santarém, Santarém, Portugal
** INESC TEC, Porto, Portugal; GOVCOPP, DEGEIT, University of Aveiro, Aveiro, Portugal
*** ISCTE - Instituto Universitário de Lisboa
**** GOVCOPP, DEGEIT, University of Aveiro, Aveiro, Portugal

1. Introduction

The luxury travel market is projected as being the fastest growing segment of the travel industry worldwide, in the forecast for the period between 2021 and 2027 (Luxury Travel Market, 2021). Furthermore, the global luxury travel market size was valued at $945.6 billion in 2019 and is expected to grow at a CAGR of 11.1% during 2021–2027 to reach 1,198.3 billion in 2027 (Luxury Travel Market, 2021). Additionally, several authors (e.g. D'Arpizio et al., 2016), predicted growth in experimental luxury services in the early 2020s.

Generally, luxury tourism follows the trends of all other luxury products and services coming from other markets and industries, with the difference that, as a sector, it is not regularly considered as part of the luxury industry. However, similar to any other product or service (traditional luxury goods, such as cars, watches, clothes or cosmetics, among others), luxury tourism is distinguished from the others mainly by its brand image, uniqueness and high prices (Horwath HTL, 2011).

In the tourism industry, luxury tourism is considered a special niche, not only from the supply side but particularly from the demand side. Luxury tourism is represented by two distinct categories, with opposing characteristics. Thus, one category consists of the preference for exclusive holidays in places frequented mostly by celebrities (e.g., exotic islands, cosmopolitan cities, and distant countries located in other continents). In the opposing category, preferences

lie for unexplored and untouched places (deserted islands, isolated beaches, cities with less demand and no pollution, and which may have a special history that has given them a certain meaning) (Popescu & Olteanu, 2014).

The profile of luxury tourism customers is rather broad as it covers a wide typology of customer categories in cases where luxury tourism with a level of quality of services compatible with their level of earnings is practised (Teodorescu 2009).

In addition, Popescu & Olteanu (2014) found that social recognition, the manifestation of social status and display this to their relatives, friends and acquaintances and colleagues are the factors with the greatest importance for standard customers of luxury tourism.

For Hennings et al. (2012), the luxury market, including the hospitality sector, can be accessible to any consumer, and furthermore, it has a continuous and active evolution. Therefore, these authors argue that luxury tourism has become available to larger and wider ranges of tourists due to the change and transformation of the traditional luxury consumption model by a new sensibility to experiential luxury.

Interestingly, it is notable that some more recent mainstream literature attests that consumers are increasingly more predisposed and receptive to luxury goods characterised by sustainability-related elements (Athwal et al., 2019): "There is a need to include sustainability in luxury tourism to benefit the environment, local communities, tourist destination and luxury tourists. However, sustainable luxury tourism is an emerging concept and needs more investigation"(Gurung et al., 2022, p. 353).

The aim of this study is to examine the concept of luxury tourism by understanding its assumptions from various perspectives and in different contexts, dimensions, and features, from the traditional perspective to mandatory innovation and sustainability associated with this. This study hence aims to address this cutting-edge question: What are the main emerging drivers for achieving the new paradigm of future luxury tourism?

This purpose of this study is fourfold, namely: to develop a theoretical background covering a set of luxury tourism themes; to develop a novel methodology approach; to provide forecast statistics for the luxury travel market; to close with a conclusion and discussion. Overall, this study aims to offer a perspective on the tourism concept of luxury tourism over time, with intent to reinforce the

strict relation with sustainability.

2. Theoretical background

2.1. Origins of luxury tourism and evolution

According to Fuhs (1992) and Neale (1981), luxury tourism was developed by elite European aristocrats who visited the popular mineral springs and spas in various places, such as Bath in Britain and also in Wiesbaden along the Rhine. The concept of luxury tourism most notably appears in the grand tour (Cohen, 1992). Mostly, until the boom of mass tourism in the 20th century, luxury leisure tourism travel was undertaken to elite locations (Moscardo & Benckendorff, 2010). In Europe, luxury tourism emerged in the nineteenth century, especially with a focus in Switzerland, particularly adventure travel such as mountaineering (Jones, 2020). The emergence of luxury tourism was paralleled in Switzerland and the United States. There was a strong growing appreciation for natural scenery, with the attempt to create a distinct artistic, literary and philosophical culture, specifically in the first half of the nineteenth century (Gassan, 2008).

Remarkably, attainable luxury tourism has emerged over recent years, resulting from the growth of the middle class, in which luxury tourism has become both democratised and accessible (Yeoman & McMahon-Beattie, 2018). Regarding the evolution of luxury, Yeoman & McMahon- Beattie (2018, p. 205) argue that:

> The concept of luxury is incredibly fluid and changes dramatically across time and culture. In the past, it was associated with champagne, caviar, designer clothes and sports cars. Nowadays with increased affluence, luxury is blurred and is no longer the preserve of the elite. Thus, understanding change is essential in forecasting the future.

More generally luxury in the tourism industry was initially directed to hotel brands and tourist destinations, but in recent years it has become closely associated with a more intangible dimension, with the regular fulfilment of desires through a set of conditions and benefits offered to consumers (Crotts, 2003). Contemporary luxury tourism travellers prefer unspoiled destinations in order to appreciate authentic, unique, real experiences, which stimulate them both physically and intellectually (Yeoman, 2008).

In brief, the evolution of luxury tourism today is no longer just understood as a traditional market but as being personal, individual, authentic, genuine and experiential, among different cultures and societies, based on their typologies, characteristics and behaviours.

2.2. Defining luxury tourism

Epistemologically, the English word luxury (the French luxe, the Italian lusso, and Portuguese luxo) derives from the Latin term *luxus*, meaning excess (Dubois, Czellar & Laurent, 2005). Table 1 summarises the set of the most cited definitions of the term luxury. It can be inferred that the concept of luxury has not evolved over the years, remaining within a typically traditional perspective. Therefore, this statement is explained by the still prevalent, but not absolute concept of the old luxury of consumption and global elitism (Yeoman & McMahon-Beattie, 2006). Albeit conversely, there is great subjectivity around the concept of luxury, since for Bakker (2005) what may be very luxurious for one tourist can mean something typical, basic or mainstream for another, because luxury tourism is perceived in different ways according to its various consumers (Park, Reisinger & Noh, 2010).

Table 1 | The eight dominant and most cited definitions of luxury in the literature review

Definitions	Authors
Exclusivity and rarity	Pantzalis (1995)
Beauty, excellence, magic, uniqueness, creativity, sensuality andexclusiveness	Kapferer (1998)
Prestige or status oriented, of superior quality, extremelyexpensive	Vigneron & Johnson (1999)
Uniqueness, excellency, magic, sensuality or dream	Phau and Prendergast (2000)
Unique design, superb performance/durability and extraordinarysuperiority	Mandhachitara & Lockshin (2004)
Sensuality, splendour and pomp	Dubois, Czellar & Laurent (2005)
Extravagance and riot	Yeoman, Brown & McMahon-Beattie (2005)
Authentic and experiential	Yeoman and McMahon-Beattie (2006)

Source: authors' own elaboration

Consequently, the definition of the concept of luxury tourism can be both subjective and relative, since it is strongly based on an amalgam of tangible and physiological characteristics, in addition to the individual and unique perspective and evaluation that each tourist attributes to it (Fedeli, 2010).

Given this, the World Tourism Forum (2016) specifically suggested including a set of eight niche markets in the luxury tourism concept, as follows: (1) accommodation in all-inclusive, luxurious five-star hotel suites and resorts; (2) cruise ship travelling or going on personalised yacht and boat tours or river cruises; (3) travels involving luxury shopping; (4) golf tourism; (5) private jet journeys; (6) extreme experience tourism (e.g., deep ocean tourism, space tourism, undiscovered destinations tours); (7) mini indulgences, such as VIP airport services; and (8) unique customised and personalised tours with authentic experiences. In addition, the Global Tourism Forum is an international collaboration platform focused on addressing the challenges for the travel industry, combining the joint efforts of government entities/public policies, stakeholders industry and academia.

From another complementary perspective, relating profile of international consumers, according to the outcomes of a study (Gardyn, 2002), for 53% of white consumers, luxury is recognised as a status symbol or prestige, compared to 43% of African Americans, and 41% of Hispanics. Moreo-ver, trendy or fashionable luxury is defined mostly by minorities (30% of African Americans and 33% of Hispanics, compared to 18% of whites). Luxury is defined as glamorous, classic or elegant according to consumers' age. African Americans and Hispanics in the 35–54 age group are most likely to perceive luxury as wasteful, unnecessary and extravagant.

In luxury and tailor-made holidays, travel and tourism, the sense of luxury is essentially evoked by the following four factors (Bakker, 2005): (1) uniqueness – a unique offer is enough to create a sense of luxury, because the product is not within everyone's reach. Having meals made from rare ingredients or enjoying a new spa experience can evoke a sense of luxury; (2) prestige/social status – an offer is perceived as a luxury when it confers a certain prestige on the traveller who receives it. For instance, in the case of a traveller telling an acquaintance about his stay at a resort with a private butler service, the belief is that the listener thinks that the traveller has a higher status; (3) cost – an item is mostly considered luxury because it is indeed expensive, particularly when the offer does not have a tangible attribute that justifies the price increase. When a guest stays at a Four Seasons resort for the first time, they appreciate and experience it as being more luxurious compared to a guest staying there for the 15th time; and (4) time – luxury is mostly understood dually, i.e., as pampering and as a convenience. Given that time

is considered one of the most precious resources in many travellers' lives, giving time back to travellers can be perceived as a luxury. For example, when a guest is served breakfast in bed or, in another situation, the guest is offered a helicopter service from the airport to the resort, the guest may also perceive it as a luxury (including if the helicopter service involves the process of being evacuated, for security, safety or other convenience reasons, such as from the Great Barrier Reef, in Australia, to the mainland, after feeling seasick from the trip, as occurred with one of the authors).

In the domain of the luxury tourism industry, there has never been a fully consensual definition of luxury among scholars, and this is still lacking, due to its high subjectivity of perceptions and its meaning being derived from the personal and interpersonal perceptions and dimensions of each tourist. In light of this, Correia, Kozak and Del Chiappa (2020, p. 966) advocate that "luxury is a complex and ill-defined concept that needs more empirical studies to be undertaken". Through a comprehensive literature review, Kuntz et al. (2020), analysed 113 articles published in scientific journals covering a period of 20 years and highlight the increasing importance of sustainable luxury topics, stating that "research on sustainable luxury is a fast-growing field (...) which, by spanning across many disciplines, provides rich evidence for theory and practice" (p. 3).

As the global luxury tourism market gradually expands and new internal and external markets continuously emerge within a new generation of luxury tourists, it is essential to respond to the new trends and challenges emerging in the new era of modern and future luxury tourism. In fact, "there is not even a generally accepted definition of what constitutes luxury tourism, which makes even estimating its size, let alone its impact, challenging" (Jones, 2020, p. 3).

2.3. Demand for luxury tourism

It is argued that in addition to past luxury market segments, new ones are emerging (Park & Reisinger, 2009). Hennings et al. (2012, p. 1018) concluded that "regardless of their countries of origin, the basic motivational drivers of luxury consumers are similar among the financial, functional, personal, and social dimensions of luxury value perceptions, although the relative importance of these dimensions varies".

Similar to Maslow's pyramid theory of the hierarchy of needs, the hierarchy of luxury travel needs (Amadeus, 2016) applies quite similarly to the behaviour of the luxury tourist, i.e., the more satisfied and fulfilled a tourist is with one level of luxury, the higher the willingness and need to proceed to a level of luxury above, seeking to satisfy their higher motivations. Amadeus's report (2016) in *Tourism Economics*, conceptualised the hierarchy of luxury travel needs (Figure 1) (validated by luxury travel leaders during a 2016 luxury connections event), identifying luxury travellers' motivations and service level expectations based on tribes in terms of their behaviours, intentions and varying levels of affluence.

Typically, the profile of the luxury tourist is based on the X generation and they are middle-aged (on average between 45 and 54 years old). In terms of status, this type of tourist is characterised by having a high disposable income and available leisure time (Park et. al., 2010). From another perspective, Lee (2006) advocates that Generation X (university graduates with good jobs and high disposable incomes) are in the top 25% of the U.S. consumers who spend a third more on personal luxury items, such as travel, than the baby boomers.

Figure 1 | The hierarchy of luxury travel needs
Source: Amadeus (2016)

In general, luxury tourists, as Silverstein et al. (2005) argue, are experienced travellers with an adventurous spirit, with a considerable degree of information, with differences between the various socio-demographic profiles (gender, age, marital status, profession, status), but with similar income and psychographic profiles (Ikkos, 2003). The cultural differences of tourist-shoppers in shopping for luxury goods, are reflected in the variables of age (Kapferer, 1998); nationality (Chadha & Husband, 2006), in particular the strong impact of tourists' national culture (McCleary et al., 2006); income (Dubois & Duquesne, 1993); and attitudes (Dubois et al., 2005). Another integrated perspective states that "luxury is now mainstream, addressing the desire to live a luxurious lifestyle without having to be in the highest income brackets" (Crotts, 2003, p. 3).

Luxury is perceived differently by Western and Asian tourists (Wong & Law, 2003). In their study, Park and Reisinger (2009) examined the main differences of the luxury and travel goods which tourists buy when on vacation, among Western, Asian, and Hispanic tourists. Thus, the results show that: (1) Western and Asian tourists attach more importance to buying "gifts for others" than Hispanic tourists; (2) Asian tourists attach more importance to buying "golf equipment", "health spa/wellness treatment", "luxury cruises", and "luxury yachts/rentals" than Hispanic tourists; and (3) Western tourists attach more importance to "fine dining" than Hispanic tourists.

In turn, "tourists want remote hotel suites, secluded tables at restaurants, private villas with a private beach or pool, personal tour guides, trainers and cooking chefs. Many affluent travellers are concerned about privacy and are willing to pay for its high premium price" (Park, Reisinger & Noh, 2010). According to Johnson (2013), luxury travel is strongly linked to the maximum authenticity of the experiences in a destination, as well as immersion in the local culture.

As part of the main outcome of a study, Park, Reisinger and Noh (2010) described the eight underlying factors and sub-factors of the luxury tourist-shopper behaviour profile, as shown in Table 2.

Table 2 | Factors of the luxury tourist-shopper behaviour

Demographic factors	Socioeconomic factors	Geographical factors	Cultural factors
Age Gender Marital status Life stage	Family Social roles Social status Income Occupation Education	Country of birth Country of origin Country of residency	Culture Subculture Race Ethnicity Nationality
Psychological factors	**Technological factors**	**Environmental factors**	**Legal factors**
Motivation Perception Learning Knowledge Beliefs Attitudes Expectations Past experiences	Attitudes to new technological developments Degree of acceptance of new technology	Perception of the environmental importance Quality of life	Legal limitations on shopping amount Tax regulations

Source: adapted from Park, Reisinger and Noh (2010)

A study carried out by Horwath (2011), through International Luxury Travel Market, concluded that, in terms of luxury, there are five traveller profiles, namely: (1) the super-active, independent-minded, educated customers; (2) the explorer; (3) the candidates; (4) the streetwise purchasers; and (5) the standard luxury traveller (Table 3).

Table 3 | Profiles of the luxury traveller

The super-active, independent-minded, educated customers	The explorer	The candidates	The streetwise purchasers	The standard luxury traveller
Look for active holidays and an authentic travel experience. As their time is precious, they reject rigid sets of planned activities. Their main aspiration is for highly personalised holidays, regardless of price.	Ready to pay a high price in return for an outstanding off-the-beaten-path vacation.	Aspire to a high level of quality and comfort. They pay great heed to social status and are very demanding in terms of service. They are more followers than pioneers in their choice of destination.	Great users of the Internet and search relentlessly for the best possible value. They are younger and have less purchasing power than the average luxury tourist. Often with two incomes and no children, they can travel off-season at attractive prices.	Flies to a destination, or takes a leisurely cruise, primarily for relaxation and a change of pace.

Source: Horwath (2011, pp. 12–13)

Different and recent approaches were taken by Amadeus (2016), projecting growth patterns until 2025, suggesting a different and evolutionary perspective of segmenting the luxury tourism consumer for future generations into three groups of luxury traveller tribes: the Reward Hunters, the Simplicity Searchers, and the Obligation Meeters (Table 4). Based on the three segments presented in the previous table, the same groups can be sub-divided through their travel patterns, referred to as Luxury Traveller Tribes, identified into the following six sub- segments: (1) Always Luxury; (2) Special Occasion; (3) Bluxury; (4) Cash-rich, Time-poor; (5) Strictly Opulent; and (6) Independent & Affluent (Table 4) (Amadeus, 2016).

In addition, there are three other luxury traveller tribes that neither express nor directly exhibit obvious luxury behaviours, namely: Ethical Travellers, Cultural Purists and Social Capital Seekers. To sum up the context of luxury traveller tribes, supporting the above standpoints, it is noteworthy to explore the direct comparison between Always Luxury and Special Occasion luxury traveller tribes (Amadeus, 2016) (Table 5).

According to the Global Opportunity Analysis and Industry Forecast, between 2021 and 2027, the luxury travel market is classified and segmented by type of tour (customised & private vacations; adventure & safari; cruise/ship expedition; small group journey; celebration & special events;

and culinary travel & shopping), age group (millennial, Generation X, baby boomers and silver hair), and type of traveller (absolute luxury, aspiring luxury, and accessible luxury) (Luxury Travel Market, 2021).

Table 4 | Luxury traveller tribes and sub-tribes

Tribes of luxury traveller		
Reward Hunters	**Simplicity Searchers**	**Obligation Meeters**
Focus on self-indulgent travel that will often mix a focus on luxury with self-improvement and personal health. The seeking of 'reward' for hard work in other areas of their life is what motivates them. They are looking for luxury experiences that are several notches above the everyday.	Value ease and transparency in their travel planning and holidaymaking above all else, and are willing to outsource their decision-making to trusted parties to avoid having to go through extensive research themselves	Travel choices restricted by the need to meet some bounded objective. These obligations can include personal obligations such as religious festivals, weddings and family gatherings. Business travellers are the most significant micro-group of many falling within this camp. Their core needs and behaviours are mainly shaped by their need to be in a certain place, at acertain time, without fail.

Sub-tribes of luxury traveller					
Always Luxury	**Special Occasion**	**Bluxury**	**Cash-rich,Time-poor**	**Strictly Opulent**	**Independent & Affluent**
4% of total luxury tourism consumers and are characterised by being consumers for whom expenditure is unobjectionable, for whom luxury is part of everyday life and therefore a requirement (rather than a privilege) often necessary to make the experience discreet and comfortable.	20% of total luxury tourism consumers and are characterised as consumers who are willing to spend financial resources to acquire luxury services as a gift for themselves, swaying them with the search for out-of-the-ordinary experiences.	31% of total luxury tourism consumers and characterised as being a combination of Obligation Meeters and Reward Hunters, in that their travel is usually associated with a professional purpose, but is often extended to also take advantage of the destination.	24% of total luxury tourism consumers and are characterised as a combination of Obligation Meeters and Simplicity Searchers, in the sense that they do not always need a special reason to travel, but in general, they have several personal limitations to travel.	18% of total luxury tourism consumers; they are characterised by being interested in the best and most glamorous travel experiences, sharing them on social media so that they can be seen by others enjoying them.	3% of total luxury tourism consumers and are characterised as being a combination of Reward Hunters and Simplicity Searchers in that they seek luxury to escape routine, experience something new and pamper themselves.

Source: adapted from Amadeus (2016)

Table 5 | Always Luxury and Special Occasion luxury traveller tribes

Always Luxury	**Special Occasion**
Will have a clear idea of the experience they want	Will be more open to suggestions and recommendations
Will not be restricted by their financial situation	Will have less of a traditional luxury mindset (therefore, fewer specific expectations overall)
More likely to be a known/repeat traveller and to have a trusted relationship with a travel brand/supplier	Lots of potential to exceed their expectations (lower down the hierarchy of luxury travel needs) and to build a relationship
Less likely to experience disruption of their end-to- end luxury experience	Will have a more limited budget
Will have more specific needs and expectations to be met (therefore greater disappointment if they are not fulfilled)	High pressure to deliver if they are celebrating a specific occasion
May require VIP levels of security and privacy (top of the hierarchy of luxury travel needs)	Less likely to be a repeat traveller, therefore less is known about them
	More potential for disruption of their end-to-end luxury experience

Source: adapted from Amadeus (2016, p. 20)

2.4. Luxury tourism products and services

In the context of the organisation of the luxury travel industry, services fall into four main groups: accommodation, transportation, experience, and travel agents and tour operators (Horwath, 2011), within the international luxury travel market. Table 6 shows the relevant and distinctive sub-sectors derived from these four groups.

Regardless of their typology, luxury tourism services should correspond to five characteristics (Veríssimo & Loureiro, 2013): (1) privacy; (2) personalisation; (3) simplicity and perfection (quality assured at all times and without errors in processes); (4) authenticity (in the tourist experience); and (5) comfort and safety.

Table 6 | Factors and sub-factors of luxury travel services

Accommodation	Transportation	Experience	Travel agents and tour operators
• City hotels: classic luxury hotels (the Pierre in NYC, the Ritz in Paris); boutique or designer hotels (the Bulgari in Milan); destination hotels with exceptional surroundings (Monasterio in Cuzco). • Resorts and spas: beach hotels; golf hotels; mountain hotels; lodges and retreats. • Vacation-ownership properties and self-catering villas.	• Air travel: scheduled airlines' first class and business class, as well as private aviation, are segments that meet luxury customers' expectations. • Cruise and high-end train travel: combining transportation and accommodation, and providing excellent levels of comfort and safety for affluent customers, these forms of travel both incorporate a luxury segment. • Cruise industry segmented categories: • Classical cruises in traditional regions like the Mediterranean, the Caribbean, and Scandinavia. • River cruises, especially to popular waterways like the Nile (before the unrest in Egypt), the Danube, the Volga, the Amazon, and the Yangtze. • Exploration cruises, offering travel in select off-the-beaten-track destinations like Antarctica Patagonia, and Australia's Kimberley region.	• Tours: art, history and shopping are key themes that drive the organisation of travel. • Outdoors: sailing, skiing, adventure and wildlife are special- interest outdoor activities that are becoming increasingly popular in luxury travel. • Food and wine: many wineries are now developing on-site restaurants, hotels and spas to meet increasing demand from tourists. Tasting schools and cooking schools are developing and opening up to tourism, not only in wine regions but also in key cities.	• Commission payments: travel agencies no longer receive fees based on a percentage of sales from airlines, but instead are charging flat service fees. • The global distribution system (GDS) war: with the growth of online sales, airlines have created their own Web-based distribution system and many have stopped selling tickets through the GDS in order to limit costs, thereby impacting agent revenues from ticket sales. • Online agency threat: Internet agencies present serious competition, exerting pressure on traditional agents to offer progressively more added value as travel consultants. • Finding quality staff: the search for new talent is becoming increasingly difficult, and agents are faced with the challenge of attracting qualified staff who will bring value and renewed energy to the industry.

Source: Horwath (2011, pp. 9–11)

A remarkable number of tourists are attracted by various luxury travel products and services (Bakker, 2005). It is often argued (Kurtz, 2004) that luxury travel goods and experiences provide exclusivity, high social status, personalisation and the greatest comfort available to tourists. In general, tourists seek the highest quality product and a wide range of services (Ikkos, 2003).

Generally, in a traditional tourism consumption context, Berry (1994) argues that there are four categories of luxury products and services that are bought by tourists, such as: (1) "sustenance"(e.g., caviar, champagne and a chef to cook); (2) "shelter"(e.g., accommodation with spa bath and sunbathing tower); (3) "clothing"(e.g., sheepskin coats with accessories, perfume and jewellery); and (4) "leisure"(e.g. various entertainment and sports items). In addition, there are nine categories within luxury travel and tourism products and services, as follows: (2) luxury resorts/hotels; (2) private villas; (3) luxury cruises; (4) private islands; (5) yacht rentals; (6) adventure travel; (7) luxury special-interest travel; (8) private jet holidays; and (9) tailor-made tours (Bakker, 2005).

A different approach was taken by Vigneron and Johnson (2004) who found a set of five dimensions of luxury goods, namely: (1) conspicuous (social status and position and high price associated with luxury); (2) uniqueness (exclusivity, rarity, and difficulty of obtaining luxury); (3) extended self (one's self-appearance and identity reflected in consumption of luxury); (4) hedonism (personal rewards and fulfilment acquired through the purchase and consumption of luxury); and (5) quality (superior product qualities and performance). More recently, Park, Reisinger and Noh (2010) categorised luxury travel goods into fourteen categories, namely (1) fine dining; (2) golf equipment; (3) health spa/wellness treatment; (4) luxury adventure travel; (5) luxury cruises; (6) luxury cultural tours; (7) luxury eco tours; (8) luxury resorts/hotels; (9) luxury special-interest travel; (10) luxury yachts/rentals; (11) private islands; (12) private jet tours; (13) private villas; and (14) tailor-made tours.

In addition to the factors and characteristics of luxury tourism goods and services, Dubois et al. (2005) attest that luxury products comprise six factors; their main characteristics are shown in Table 7.

Table 7 | Factors of luxury tourism products

Excellent quality	Premium price	Scarcity and uniqueness	Aesthetics and poly-sensuality	Ancestral heritage and personal history	Superfluous-ness
Top quality components or materials, and Exceptional craftsmanship	Absolute and comparative value, linked as the first luxury attribute	Prohibition of mass production of the genuine products	Beauty, magnificence and exquisiteness needs, with multisensory experiences	Well established history with long-lasting, continuing traditions	Exceeded customer expectations, along with additional values assignment

Source: adapted from Dubois, Laurent & Czellar (2005)

Considering another complementary perspective in the field of luxury tourism service provision, from the side of service providers, Iloranta (2019) pioneered the construction of the service providers' perceptions model (Figure 2). Thus, the service provider assumes a role as facilitator of the luxury tourism experience, based on their own perceptions and experience, as well as the customer's expectation and context. The model (Figure 2) demonstrates the favourable prerequisites offered by service providers, which contribute to the co-creation of a hedonic and eudaemonic well-being experience derived from an ultimate and ordinary luxury assumption.
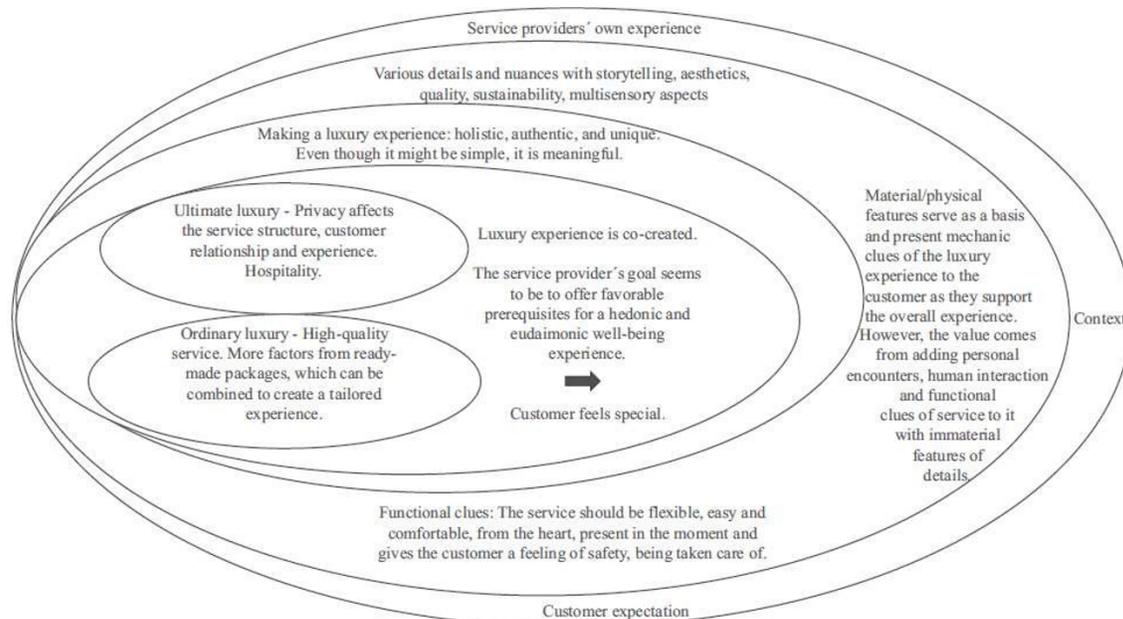

Figure 2 | Model of the service providers' perceptions

2.5. Luxury tourism towards sustainability

Despite the increasing interest in sustainable luxury tourism, extant theory and practice are underdeveloped. Potentially, the practice of sustainable luxury tourism is considered a way to incorporate the care to cherish and maintain visited places (Walker & Moscardo, 2016). However, sustainable luxury tourism continues an emerging concept (Gurung et al., 2022).

In fact, it is widely known and recognised that typical mass tourism is harmful to the environment. As a result of this fact, environmental education has taken on a new role for luxury tourism businesses (Jones, 2020). Consequently, in this direction, it has been argued that "management and

protection of landscapes and eco-systems are integral elements of a new wave of sustainable luxury tourism" (Poelina & Nordensvard, 2018, p. 149).

Poelina and Nordensvard (2019) state that, more than desirable, sustainable luxury tourism is necessary. However, very little is known to date about how sustainability in the luxury tourism sector should work and continuously progress in terms of the value chain concerning the functional and operational performance of the tourism hospitality service. The major gap is the almost total absence of scientific advances concerning sustainable luxury tourism worldwide, which means this latest research topic remains very scarce. This highlighted gap is reinforced by Moscardo (2017, p. 164), who attests: "given that there are a number of forces encouraging growth in luxury tourism and that there is an increasing number of companies claiming to provide sustainable luxury tourism opportunities, it seems timely to critically examine this concept"; by Gurung et al. (2022, p. 353) who reinforce that "sustainable luxury tourism… needs more investigation"; and also by Spence et al. (2022, p. 403), for whom "luxury tourism is an emerging area of research and deserves consideration for its implications for tourism and hospitality management and policy development".

Despite recessions, growing social inequality and economic crises, it should be noted that sustainability issues have become a challenge for the continued success and growth of the luxury sector, although they are considered a paradox as well as a provocation for some critics (Kapferer & Michaut, 2015). As a prior result of new sustainable luxury tourism concepts and ventures, ecotourism hotels and resorts have emerged. In relation to conventional luxury hotel chains, groups and brands, these have advanced towards setting up sustainability programmes and obtaining certification (Jones, 2020). As their main findings, Spence et al. (2022) discussed the need to measure the social and environmental impact of luxury tourism within the concept of luxury tourism as part of a

renewed understanding of luxury tourism in terms of its crucial importance, production, consumption and value.

In the tourism industry, including the luxury cluster, sustainability represents a major key driver for guaranteeing success for most companies (e.g. Kim et al., 2020). As Amatulli et al. (2021) prove, the appeal of sustainability demonstrated a positive reaction to luxury hospitality by tourists. Considering the climate emergency on a global scale, sustainable luxury tourism, especially in remote destinations, is already starting to become the sine qua non of luxury tourism in the post-pandemic near future (Legrand, 2020). This has resulted in a new emerging issue, namely the sustainable strategy of luxury consumers (Lopes et al., 2022).

3. Methodology

3.1. Focus group technique

The research literature considers the focus group as the main type of moderately sized group. The groups are "focused" because individuals are gathered who previously have had some common experience or presumably share some common views, integrating a moderator (Yin, 2011, 2012). Focus groups are one means of qualitative data collection, using a researcher-led group discussion to generate data (Given, 2008). The focus group is recognised as one of the most suitable techniques to conduct and validate qualitative research. This methodology approach aims to achieve in-depth data from a purposely selected group of participants (Nyumba et al., 2018). Nyumba et al. (2018) argue that the number of participants per focus group (where reported) ranges from three to 21 participants with a median of 10 participants.

Therefore, the qualitative methodology used for this study was a focus group, with the pur-

pose of exploring a specific set of eight questions (Tong et al., 2007) in order to redefine the concept of new luxury tourism. There were derived from the literature review, and are as follows:

(1) How would you define new luxury tourism and its future?;

(2) Are you a consumer of new luxury tourism?;

(3) Who is a consumer of new luxury tourism and what is their profile?;

(4) Is Asia a big luxury tourism market with regard to demand and offer? Why?;

(5) And what about the USA? Do they, as the richest country in the world, seek luxury tourism?;

(6) Are experiences the anchor of new luxury tourism?;

(7) Will new luxury tourism become democratised in new and future generations?; and

(8) Is new luxury tourism compatible with sustainability? In what way? Is new luxury tourism sustainable?

The design of the focus group took the participants' relationships with the theme at hand into account. In this sense, the following precautions were taken (Barbour & Schostak, 2005): (a) access to the group members; (b) problem profile; (c) perspectives and discursive skills of the group members; (d) their identification with the research problem; (e) ethics in data collection, processing and use; (f) possibility of recording the moment; (g) representation of the experience of the research process and the experiences of the group members; (h) analysis process; and (i) production of a written report.

The construction of the script emerged from the in-depth analysis and respective outcomes of the dominant literature review mentioned above,

through three major gaps identified, namely:

(1) the first major gap is the almost total absence of scientific advances concerning sustainable luxury tourism worldwide, which makes this latest research topic remain very scarce. This highlighted gap is reinforced by Moscardo (2017, p. 164), who attests: "given that there are a number of forces encouraging growth in luxury tourism and that there is an increasing number of companies claiming to provide sustainable luxury tourism opportunities, it seems timely to critically examine this concept"; (2) in the domain of the luxury tourism industry, there has never been a fully consensual definition of luxury among many scholars and this is still lacking due to its high subjectivity of perceptions and its meaning being derived from the personal and interpersonal perceptions and dimensions of each tourist. In light of this, Correia, Kozak and Del Chiappa (2020, p. 966) advocate that "luxury is a complex and ill-defined concept that needs more empirical studies to be undertaken"; and (3) in fact, "there is not even a generally accepted definition of what constitutes luxury tourism, which makes even estimating its size, let alone its impact, challenging" (Jones, 2020, p. 3). Therefore, a focus group script was constructed which allowed the moderator to steer the course of data collection. This technique allows researchers to listen to the participants' socially constructed views and beliefs (Ennis & Chen, 2012) and they are relatively free to discuss the topics addressed. The script was validated by two experts from the Tourism Area of the European Commission and the OECD Tourism Committee, who reformulated it and presented the reformulated version. It was then tested with a similar group and reformulated again to be considered definitive.

In relation to ethical terms, throughout the study, ethical principles were ensured and guaranteed through the participants' anonymity and the confidentiality of the data obtained during the focus group, with no information allowing for their identification and ensuring the ethical principle of

autonomy. As such, a model of informed, free and informed consent was drawn up for the researcher and the participants.

3.2. Sample design and data collection

As for the inclusion criteria for the constitution of the mixed focus group, the following were considered: researchers, practitioner-academics, and practitioners; at least 10 years of professional or academic experience, both at the national and international level: and finally, being directly linked to the area of luxury tourism at the national and international level.

The participants who were contacted and met the inclusion criteria were informed of the study objectives and the procedures that would be followed for data collection, namely the audio recording of the focus group (no image recording). It was explained how the session would take place, that questions would be asked by the researcher and that they would have total freedom to express their opinions. The focus group was conducted via videoconference. First, each of the six focus group participants was given a briefing of the purpose of the study when invited to participate. After acceptance, they received an individual restricted access link to the videoconference. In addition, in selecting participants, it was ensured in advance that they shared perspectives on the investigation topic, resulting in the creation of a heterogeneous group, as per the main inclusion criteria, where the only heterogeneous characteristic was based on the simple similarity of participants' demographic characteristics. The moderator induced all six focus group participants, of Portuguese nationality, to express their opinions with guidance. In addition, the moderator probed and followed up on all of the topics of interest which emerged, while continuing to add, clarify and validate data within the focus group experience. All ethical standards were ensured and the confidentiality of participants with

regard to data collection was guaranteed. The focus group was carried out on 16 May 2022, and was three hours in duration, conducted in the English language. The audio material was transcribed verbatim into a Word document that totalled nine pages.

3.3. Data analysis method

As regards the analysis procedure, the material obtained was imported into the NVivo software. NVivo is a program for qualitative and mixed methods research. Among the numerous possibilities and consequent benefits that using this software makes possible, for qualitative research it enables: 1) unstructured text, audio, video or image data to be analysed and organised; 2) audio and video files to be played so that interviews can be transcribed in the software itself; 3) social media data to be captured from Facebook and Twitter using the NCapture browser plug-in; 4) notes and captures to be imported from Evernote, 5) citations to be imported from EndNote, Mendeley, Zotero or other bibliographic management software and 6) simple text analysis queries (such as text search or word frequencies) to be performed for text data in several languages. Regarding quantitative analysis, descriptive statistics, inferential statistics and meta-analysis, these tools are also available in this software. To sum up, NVivo provides efficiency regarding time, transparency and multiplicity, but also enables the capture of mixed data, both quantitative and qualitative, and the accommodation of a large, rich amount of data, regardless of the method used (Given, 2008; Yin, 2011, 2012). For each participant, cases and attributes were created in order to characterise them and enable the individual consultation of their testimony.

4. Results

The profiles of a total of six participants in the mixed focus group were divided into three groups, each group composed of two participants, namely: (1) researchers, (2) practitioner-academics, and (3) practitioners. Table 8 shows their characterisation, considering the academic degree, years of work, job title and position, and research area.

Table 8 | Participants in the mixed focus group

	Researchers			
	Academic degree	**Years of work**	**Job title and position**	**Research area**
P1	PhD in tourism	27	Adjunct professor Senior researcher	Luxury tourism and leisure
P5	PhD in marketing and strategy	10	Coordinator professor Senior researcher	Marketing and strategy in luxury tourism

	Practitioner-academics		
	Academic degree	**Years of work**	**Job title and position**
P3	Degree in hospitality management	33	Luxury hospitality specialist in strategy and operations Professor of technical-vocational courses in hospitality and tourism Coordinator of the executive course in luxury tourism for the public entity of Tourism of Portugal.
P6	Master's degree in hotel management	13	Professor of technical-vocational courses in hospitality and tourism. Luxury hotel manager

	Practitioners		
	Academic degree	**Years of work**	**Job title and position**
P2	Post-graduate in branding and communication	20	Senior brand & marketing manager in sustainable luxury hospitality Wellness & healing hospitality advocate
P4	Degree in management consulting MBA in directing and managing the luxury universe	14	Senior luxury marketing consultant

With regard to the study of word frequency as an exploratory form of data, it consists of an exploratory analysis that allows the data to emerge with more depth and flexibility (Kaefer, Roper, & Sinha, 2015). The word cloud illustrates the distribution of words and makes data visualisation easier, as the more often the word appears, the larger it is (Kaefer, Roper, & Sinha, 2015). Accordingly, a study of the 100 most frequent words in the document containing the transcript of all the interventions (exact matches) with a minimum length of four letters was carried out. The most frequent words were subject to a text search (locating the references in which these words were

used) to appreciate the context in which they were uttered. The analysis procedures followed the stages of thematic analysis in order to identify, analyse and report the themes that emerged from the transcripts of the participants' discourse (Braun & Clarke, 2006, 2012). The categorisation technique presupposed the transformation of data to achieve a representation of their content.

Thus, the following steps were performed (Resende, 2016): (a) a full reading of the texts obtained from the interventions as a whole; (b) initial categorisation of the units of meaning based on the questions in the guide of all interventions, naming them according to the terms used in the research, their purposes, and the researcher's experience and knowledge; (c) reading by theme, category, and subcategory, reviewing all the categorised material, reconfiguring the coding whenever necessary and identifying the emergence of new categories or their elimination; and (d) interpretation and writing of the results for each theme and respective substitutes. In this stage, after 'intimate familiarity' (Charmaz, 2004) with the focus group contents, we tried to establish a sequential and coherent discourse of the issues addressed in the interview, taking care to highlight the participants' opinions and considerations.

Upon analysing the word cloud (Figure 3 and Table 9) and taking the words that refer to the present research into consideration, the importance of the three main ones becomes evident: (1) luxury, (2) tourism, and (3) experiences. In the current research, these three main words attest to their high relevance recognised as the major outcomes, due to the fact that they are the most consensual and similar in all questions in all focus group participants. The results of this focus group suggest (1) luxury, (2) tourism, and (3) experiences as a cutting-edge dimensions which are closely associated with the concept of new luxury tourism.

Figure 3 | Word cloud

Table 9 | Most frequent words (above 50% of the weighted percentage)

Word	Extension	Counting	Weighted percentage (%)
Luxury	6	60	3.91
Tourism	7	50	3.26
Experiences	11	33	2.15
Consumes	8	20	1.30
Market	6	19	1.24
Social	6	14	0.91
Sustainable	11	14	0.91
Culture	7	13	0.85
Value	5	10	0.65
Destinations	12	9	0.59
Future	6	9	0.59
High	4	9	0.59
Local	5	9	0.59
People	6	9	0.59
Reality	7	9	0.59
Brands	6	8	0.52

Three themes, ten categories, and two subcategories emerged from the data analysis of the three themes, representing the perceptions and considerations about the concept of new luxury tourism (as shown in Figures 2 and 3). The total of these themes, categories and subcategories encompasses the paradigm of the concept of new luxury tourism which as most explored, argued and discussed in the focus group.

The mind map (Figure 4) represents the visualisation of the data that emerged from the thematic analysis. From the concept of tourism, three

themes emerged: (1) luxury tourism, (2) external markets, and (3) features of luxury tourism. Specifically in order, the theme of luxury tourism presents a higher number of categories with a total of five, followed by the theme of the features of luxury tourism with three categories, and finally the theme of the external market with two categories and two sub-categories derived from one of them.
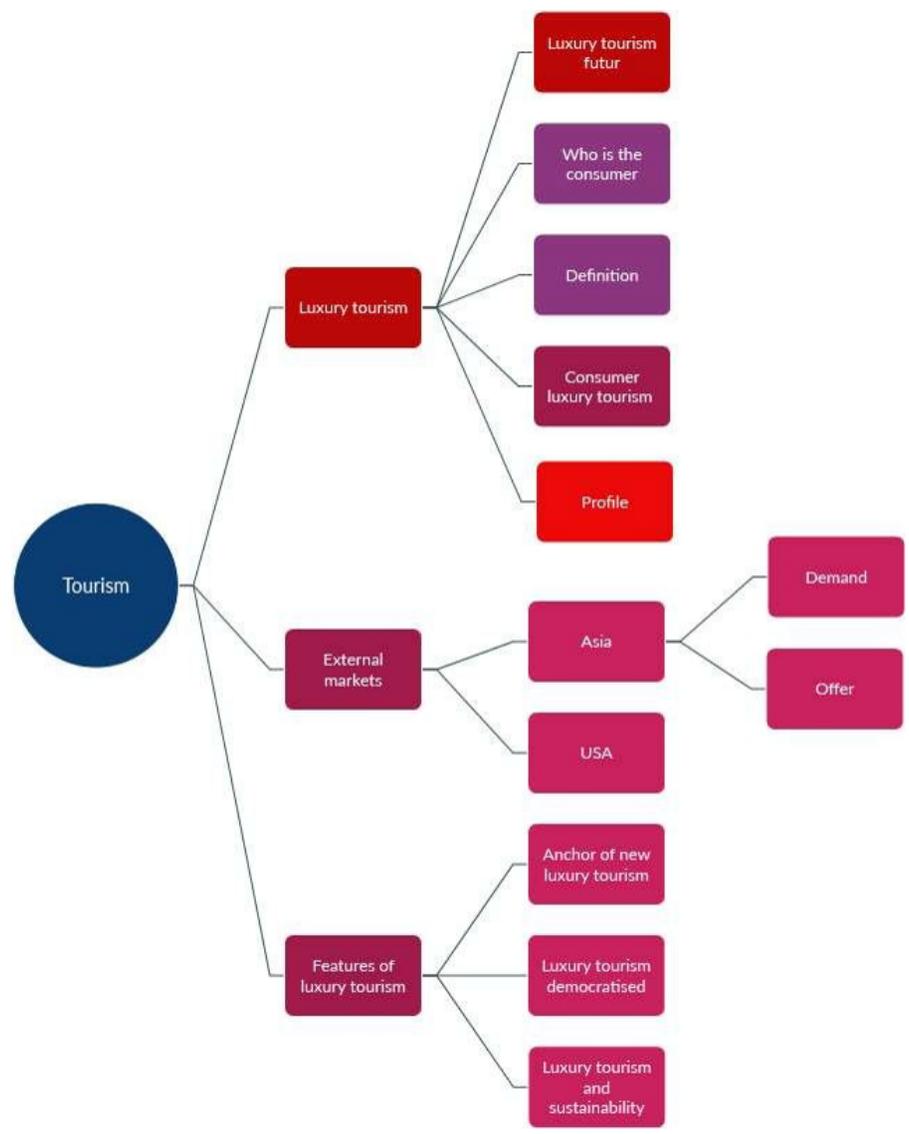

Figure 4 | Themes, categories, and subcategories emerging from the focus group

The analysis of the units of meaning of each participant according to the category and subcategories (Table 10) allows analytical flexibility and shows how they can enhance transparency and trustworthiness of the qualitative research process. It can be inferred that the theme and underlying categories that achieved the most importance in terms of units of meaning for the participants was luxury tourism with 34, then external markets with 22 and thirdly features of luxury tourism with 18 (as shown in Table 10).

Table 10 | Units of meaning of each participant according to the category and subcategories

	P1	P2	P3	P4	P5	P6
Luxury tourism						
Definition	1	3	0	0	2	0
Future of luxury tourism	1	3	1	2	0	2
Consumer luxury tourism	1	1	1	1	1	1
Who is the consumer?	1	0	1	2	1	1
Profile	1	2	1	1	2	0
External markets						
Asia - Demand	1	3	0	2	2	1
Asia - Offer	0	0	2	1	0	0
USA demand for luxury tourism	1	3	1	2	2	1
Features of luxury tourism						
Anchor of new luxury tourism	1	1	1	1	1	1
Luxury tourism democratised	1	1	1	1	1	1
Luxury tourism and sustainability	1	1	1	1	1	1

Regarding the main purpose of this focus group – redefining the concept of new luxury tourism – the participants thought it complex to define luxury tourism, pointing out that excessive consumption and emotional emptiness (P3) changed to specific interests and with purposeful meanings, in-depth experiences that 'transform me through the experience of travel' (P4), and with environmental concerns (P6).

> Excessive consumption and emotional emptiness have given way to purpose and meaning; futility has given way to the depth of the experiences we choose to live. A new reality that is reflected in holiday decisions, from the destination to the hotel, how to get there, and above all: what is the purpose of this trip? (P2)
> To provide luxury is to provide the customer with the opportunity to explore the authenticity of the destination, meeting their physical, emotional, and intellectual desires (high price being usually a condition associated with luxury). (P5)
> Luxury should also be compatible with sustainability and socially responsible marketing (good environmental practices, pet-friendly trends, eco-motivations, and green marketing). Particularly environmental concerns (reducing waste, not destroying native resources) mean that durable, reusable, and recyclable are the order of the day and that luxury cannot forget to be positive. (P5)

Table 11 summarises the key findings of the focus group, divided into the set of eight questions including all six participants.

Table 11 | Key findings of the focus group

Defining new luxury tourism and its future
■ The new paradigm of luxury – a smarter, more responsible and more emotional luxury
■ Society is awakening to a more integrated, conscious and sustainable lifestyle
■ More meaningful, personalised and high-profile experiences that enhance quality of life, providing the opportunity to explore the authenticity of the destination, meeting physical, emotional and intellectual desires

As consumers of new luxury tourism
■ Growing appreciation of luxury tourism consumption
■ Moderate consumer of new luxury tourism
■ An ambassador that anticipates the future, with the identification of "new luxury" as a mission as a person and professional

Profile of the consumer of the concept of new luxury tourism
■ Mindset and taste for high quality, sustainable, customised, mindful experiences with a deeper sense of meaning, outstanding service delivery and genuine care
■ Transits from a pandemic reality to a new world, appreciating much more the present and the experiences they can enjoy in it, and valuing smart destinations
■ Search for authenticity, for transformational experiences, for the discovery of new places, cultures and people, truly differentiating and creative experiences with more proximity to nature

Luxury tourism of Asia regarding demand and offer
■ Exoticism tends to be framed as one of the characteristics of this type of tourism
■ Service excellence and indigenous product, where the democratisation of luxury tourism is an increasingly accessible reality
■ Asia is a big market in the supply of very high-end tourism experiences in fabulous resorts and hotels, where nature, sustainability, local experiences, customised impeccable service, pleasure for the body and mind as well as culture are provided for the happy few

Luxury tourism of USA regarding demand and offer
■ The USA is a "seeker" with trend-driven people, so it is an excellent market for luxury tourism
■ Affluent, educated Americans are the no.1 clients of luxury tourism and of meaningful local experiences with an outstanding level of customised, exquisite service
■ The luxury tourism business has been changing slowly and sustainably in recent years

Anchor experiences of the new luxury tourism concept
■ Experiences that create a memorable, intangible and differentiating emotion
■ The immateriality of the experience with differentiation and the dimension that activates the various senses that contributes to the creation of positive memories
■ Beautiful experiences and impeccable, human, kind, innovative and hedonic service

Democratisation of the new luxury tourism in new and future generations
■ New generations have a greater environmental and ecological concern
■ Younger generations are prepared to live in an ever-changing and ever-more global world
■ Digital nomads, independent workers, CEOs, travel agents, tour operators (among others) travel and break the so-called normal standards, seek comfort & high-speed Wi-Fi, and like to create a connection with accessible luxury tourism locals

Compatibility of the new luxury tourism with sustainability
■ New luxury tourism should be mandatorily sustainable – especially when ESG criteria are mandatory
■ New luxury tourism should be related to sustainability
■ Sustainability will also be an imperative part of the concept of new luxury tourism

5. Discussion of the research results

Discussion of the focus group results indicates a set of main outcomes, boundaries, implications, advances and directions. The main outcomes and closing remarks are contrary to those of most of the aforementioned dominant articles in the literature review, contradicting the fact that luxury tourism cannot be sustainable. Undoubtedly, this study represents a considerable novel advanced phase in these unexplored issues and assumptions, with cutting-edge focus group research results.

Sustainable luxury tourism is noted as the mainstream segment of luxury tourism, with a particular positioning and focus on new and future ge-

nerations of tourists and travellers.

Very few authors (Moscardo, 2017; Poelina & Nordensvard, 2018) have more recently been contradicting the vast majority of authors (who also negatively contest the possibility of luxury tourism being sustainable) and defending the possibility of the sustainable vector being applied to luxury tourism. Therefore, the results of the focus group prove and reinforce that luxury tourism can and should also be sustainable. As proof of this, it is mandatory that both traditional, conventional luxury hotel chains, groups and brands must start moving towards sustainability certification through requirements and programmes.

Therefore, because this study was the first of its kind, as the combination of these two perspectives (the traditional perspective to the sustainable trigger of luxury tourism) has never been made, it was not possible to directly relate the analysis of the results to previous studies.

All focus group participants advocate that it is absolutely crucial to rethink luxury tourism as both a key element and a trigger leading to sustainability. Further, based on these assumptions, one of the greatest inferred contributions of sustainable luxury tourism is its benefit in the reengineering planning of destinations and territories. In light of this, in the future, destinations, territories and products that promote luxury tourism offerings should introduce sustainable sophistication factors in terms of the requirements of the ESG framework.

It should be carefully considered that luxury tourists tend to look for notable experiences which are very much associated with the consumption of tangible or intangible products and services produced at the destination. This means that luxury tourism has to occur at the place of consumption. By doing so, it demands higher involvement of local products, services and human resources. These are amongst the most critical factors defined by the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG), and have the capacity to link the economics and manage-

ment of tourists with territorial planning (Costa, 2020; Flores & Costa, 2022; Martins, 2022; Malta et al., 2021).

To sum up the findings of the focus group, what really is new luxury tourism? There seems to be a need to move forward in developing a new concept of luxury tourism that leads to the issue of modernity, bringing it up to date. Hence, the proposal is to redefine the concept of luxury tourism through a new broad definition representing the new post-COVID-19 pandemic era, namely:

> Luxury tourism is now a mainstream experience, covering all targets, based on a broadly luxurious tourism lifestyle, simultaneously affordable, exclusive and versatile, which provides an amalgam of components (e.g., functional, reward, indulgence, emotional, aspirational) comprising a bespoke servicescape, immersive and intangible experiences, local cultures and communities, and remote environments, revealing a new shift referred to as the democratisation of luxury, leading to smart options and seeking innovation and sustainability as a global mandatory requirement.

6. Conclusion and implications

A stream of multiple research analysed in the dominant literature shows that the concept of luxury tourism has not been stagnant over time; quite on the contrary, it has followed the pace of evolution of societies in different perspectives and contexts, adapting to new trends and emerging paradoxes characteristic of the industry. It has been proven that luxury tourism still remains closely associated with shopping tourism, due to the fact that luxury shopping is very much encouraged in

international travel and is one of its main elements, and hence is widely recognised as a very popular tourist activity, as well as the cross-cultural differences between tourists and travellers. It was evidenced that, although cross-cultural luxury tourists have different motivations, emotions, reasons and aspirations to consume and experience luxury tourism, globally they possess identical values over the decades, from the past to the present. Nowadays, luxury tourism is in a continuous phase of transformation and is becoming increasingly democratised, resulting from new generations and new behavioural patterns. Moreover, it can also be inferred that luxury tourism is compatible with sustainability.

One of the major contributions of this study is the understanding of the longitudinal and cross-cultural differences of the concept of luxury tourism, noting significant changes in the way luxury has been perceived and experienced, from traditional and conventional luxury tourism in its genesis to the current new concept of emotional and sustainable luxury tourism. Another main conclusion of this study is the clear evidence of two approaches to luxury tourism: the traditional version which is represented as a form of luxury or notable status, and the other context guided by new luxury tourism, which is characterised by its emotional, hedonistic, experiential and sustainable form. However, both share a set of characteristics, namely quality, exclusivity, aesthetics and elegance. The original contribution of this study was the proposal of a new definition of luxury tourism, from a multidimensional, transformational, current and ongoing perspective, in order to advance this particular research area, as a theoretical contribution.

The assertion of this research is that since its origin, the concept of luxury tourism has gone through various phases and stages from an evolutionary and progressive perspective until today. Over the years, the recognised concept of luxury tourism has moved away from the traditional perspective, such as resorts and five-star hotels, towards a wide diversity of unique experiences (including, for example, climbing Mount Kilimanjaro with a large and complex team, present both before, during and after the endeavour, which is geared to getting the adventure tourist safely to the top of the mountain and then back home – as was the case with the spouse of one of the authors). Luxury tourism is considered an ever-evolving complex concept with an amalgam of characteristics, factors and dimensions that fulfil the lifestyle desires and motivations of luxury tourists, mainly revolving around exclusive, memorable and authentic experiences, with a focus on value rather than price.

Luxury tourism is based on multiple factors, features and attributes beyond the traditional concept associated with luxury, and changes over time. It is crucial that academics, practitioners and marketers understand and develop strategies that effectively accompany the shift from culturally conventional luxury tourism (e.g., the USA and Asia) to the contemporary paradigm. This can perhaps be seen as the ultimate challenge to achieve, increasingly characterised by the increase in sustainability inherent in the luxury tourism experience, by continuously designing sustainable luxury tourism experiences, through a variety of new forms and concepts of hospitality products, services and accommodation.

Luxury tourism no longer belongs to the elite, who were initially associated with it. Nowadays, luxury tourism, derived from the affluence of tourists, can also be a non-traditional mass market and is not necessarily only expensive. It can be assumed that luxury tourism is more and goes beyond the monetary value directly associated with a tourism product or service, but rather the personal authentic experience of each tourist. These facts support the argument that the concept of luxury tourism is volatile over time, as cultures differ in their behaviours and consumption patterns.

Recent decades have been marked by paradoxes in what luxury tourism was at its origin and in what it has been transforming and changing into. Nowadays, luxury tourism has already initiated ef-

forts towards the sustainability associated with it, as a way to respond to new patterns of luxury tourism consumption by demand. This justifies the increasing proliferation of eco-resorts, resorts, hotels, hostels and glamping units. Concerning conventional and traditional luxury concepts, such as hotel chains, groups and brands, their adaptation and application of sustainable certification in some hotel services and amenities is noticeable. Therefore, luxury tourism has contributed to the reduction of the environmental footprint.

Compared to traditional luxury tourism studies, the study of sustainable luxury tourism is in a still largely unexplored emerging state that deserves equal scrutiny. Luxury tourism through sustainability is overdue. A shift towards sustainable luxury tourism implies a path and an in-depth understanding of the mechanisms that enable a successful combination of luxury and sustainability, and would be meaningful and beneficial for both practitioners and academia, for a future research agenda.

Regarding the implications for management, stakeholders of luxury tourism products and destinations should be aware of the new paradigm of sustainability in this segment in the future, due to the fact of the emerging motivations and behaviours of luxury tourists in new forms of luxury tourism. As future research, the development of a model for sustainable luxury tourism is suggested, seen as a new trigger of luxury tourism, in a post-outbreak crisis scenario.

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