Towards a Better Understanding of Yacht Cruisers in Europe: The Case of Algarve, Portugal

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ABSTRACT

The aim of this research was to understand the profile of yacht cruisers in Europe who cross the Algarve coasts, specifically their travel characteristics, motivations, lifestyles, and relationships with nature and local people. This research also intended to produce knowledge about yacht cruisers' needs in terms of services and facilities. Data was obtained from 21 semi-structured interviews. The responses to the sociodemographic and travel characteristics were analysed using descriptive statistics techniques. The files in text format were then subjected to qualitative content analysis utilising NVivo 9 (QSR International, 2010). Travel characteristics, motivations, lifestyle of yacht cruisers and their relationship with nature and local people, needs, and related facilities in the host destinations. The findings of the study could be applied within the scope of public policies, that is, regarding the leveraging of the Algarve's image as a sustainable nautical tourism destination. The knowledge about motivation and lifestyle created by this study is compelling for both the consolidation of theories and their implementation into regional policies and also provides interesting data for other destinations as these yachters move to other geographies. None of the main research on ocean cruising was undertaken in Europe or focused on European yacht cruisers' lifestyles.

1. Introduction.

Yacht cruisers – also called ocean cruisers or blue water cruisers – can be defined by the following criteria: they own their boats, live on board, and are constantly travelling (Jennings, 1999, 2003). This activity is currently practised by a variety of individuals, from solo sailors to groups of friends, retired couples, or young couples with children. Many are effectively part of the contemporary phenomenon sometimes referred to as "the grey revolution": retirees, usually from wealthy countries, looking to spend this phase of their lives actively and to travel constantly. However, the practice of yacht sailing is not limited to this category of social actors and seems to be a part of the global neo-nomadism phenomenon (D'Andrea, 2006; Hannam, 2009). The literature is unanimous, stating that this is not just a recreational or leisure activity but an authentic "lifestyle" with its own characteristics (Jennings, 1999; Macbeth, 1985, 1992) because it requires a broad set of skills and knowledge (e.g., ranging from navigation and sailing techniques to mechanics).

Some studies have related nautical tourism with its destinations, for instance Greece (Diakomihalis, 2007), Portugal ('Author', 2022; Perna, Custódio, Gouveia, & Oliveira, 2008), Italy (Bizzarri & Foresta, 2011), Spain (Alcover et al., 2011), Croatia (Jugovic´, Kovac?ic´, & Hadzic, 2011), and Poland (Kizielewicz, 2012).

Jugovic´, Kovac?ic´, and Hadzic (2011) described the positive impacts of nautical tourism on a destination's population through economic development, specifically employment growth in numerous service business activities directly or indirectly related to boaters' needs. Nautical tourism also implies benefits in terms of exchanging information, knowledge, culture, lifestyle, idea creation, free thinking, creativity, valorisation of the destination, and sustainable development. However, there are also

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some negative aspects to yacht sailing. For instance, anchoring can damage the seagrass, corals, and animals (Davenport & Davenport, 2006).

Analytical insights into yacht travellers' characteristics, lifestyles, and needs can help to establish a bridge of understanding between guests and host destinations, allow authorities to develop appropriate strategies, and imply progressive changes (Higham, 2005). González, Ledesma, and González (2015) highlighted that knowledge about the characteristics of the people who take part in the nautical tourism industry is crucial to promoting the development of the sector. This way of travelling may also substantially contribute to socio-economic development, fight seasonality, increase the locals' standards of living, and preserve the coastal ecosystems.

Every year, hundreds of sailing and power boats cross the coasts of Portugal, but there are no official statistical data on the number of these vessels (Silveira, Santos & Perna, 2018). Many of these boats stay overnight in the the Algarve region, while others remain here for extended periods (Perna et al., 2008).

Until now, few social scientists have studied yacht cruising, and very few articles and books have been published on the topic. The first researcher who studied yacht cruisers' culture from the social science perspective was Macbeth (1985). The author used the psychological theories of *flow* and *autotelic* reward and suggested that cruising is *autotelic* because it is rewarding in itself, leading its practitioners to a state of psychological satisfaction: "the process is intellectually, emotionally and physically challenging, it requires constant problem solving; it's freely engaged in; there is a sense of personal control; and there are no extrinsic rewards of consequence" (1985, p. 253). In a subsequent paper (1992), the same author sustained that cruisers share a "subculture ideology" and that its members are, in a certain sense, "affirmative deviants". They are deviants in relation to the values and norms of Western societies, but this deviance contributes to their psychological health. The author highlights that cruisers pursue an alternative and more satisfying lifestyle characterised by the search for freedom, independence, self-reliance, and autonomy. Macbeth (2010) described yacht cruising as a "utopia" and yacht cruisers as a community of "social criticists". Sailors' ideals are part of "modern utopian thought by being fundamentally a critique of the society of their origin" (2010, p. 23). They represent the antithesis of mass tourists because they are motivated by the desire to live "the authentic visceral experience of crossing oceans and living in foreign lands" (2010, p. 26).

According to Stebbins (1997, p. 350), "a lifestyle is a distinctive set of shared patterns of tangible behaviour that is organised around a set of coherent interests or social conditions or both, that is explained and justified by a set of related values, attitudes, and orientations and that, under certain conditions, becomes the basis for a separate common social identity for its participants". Macbeth (1985, 1992) maintained that yacht cruisers have formed a "subculture" endowed with its own values, norms, and representations of the world. Among its main features are the strong sense of "community" (Kleinert, 2009; Koth, 2013; Lusby & Anderson, 2012).

In line with Macbeth's findings, Jennings (1999, p. iii), asserted that what motivates these people to "move from a life in the centre of mainstream western societies to one in the margins is the need to add challenge to their lives, to fulfil a dream, to escape from the pressures and constraints of their own society, as well as to experience new cultures. The choice of this risky and sometimes dangerous lifestyle offers them a sense of adventure and absolute control of their lives."

Following the path inaugurated by Macbeth and Jennings, Lusby and Anderson (2008, 2010) studied the psychological impacts of this autotelic lifestyle among yacht cruisers. They showed how cruising fulfils sailors' needs for autonomy, relatedness, and competence. Cruisers create a space free from the structural roles and obligations of everyday life, where they experience social equality and intense feelings of togetherness (2008). Lusby and Anderson (2010) concluded that travelling on a sailing yacht becomes a way to accomplish a utopian alternative to the lifestyle led in the society of origin. Later, the authors (2012) concluded that cruisers were genuinely happy with their lives, scoring higher than the average for happiness in industrialised countries. According to this survey, these individuals experience a great sense of community, which is highly correlated with their satisfaction with life. Moreover, Kleinert (2009) and Koth (2013) demonstrated how the new technologies of communication contribute to strengthening yacht cruisers' sense of community.

Brown (2016), using the auto-ethnography method, described how the identity of an offshore sailor is achieved and reaffirmed through embodied practices and learned skills.

Along this line, the aim of this research was to understand the profile of yacht cruisers in Europe, across the Algarve region, specifically their travel characteristics, motivations, lifestyle, relationship with nature and local people, needs, and related facilities in the host destinations.

2. Methods.

2.1. Context of the Case.

Portugal occupies a crucial geographical position in the route from Central and Northern Europe to the Mediterranean and the Caribbean (and vice versa) and from the Caribbean, via the Azores, to the Mediterranean (Cardoso et al., 2023). The Algarve is characterised by having the largest number of places to moor boats among the Portuguese regions (European Commission, 2013), accounting for 29% of all those in Portugal (Bernardo, Marques, & Correia, 2016). Nautical tourism started to grow in the Algarve due to the general increase in tourism in the country and the core importance of the sea in tourism activities at the beginning of the 21st century. Perna, Custódio, Gouveia, and Oliveira (2008) highlighted the opportunity of nautical recreation to fight the problem of seasonality in the Algarve due to the monotonous pattern of touristic stays during the year.

2.2. Data Collection.

This kind of research needs a qualitative, interpretative and naturalistic approach to the phenomenon to be studied, which

means that researchers study phenomena in their natural settings, trying to keep close to the meanings that people give to their actions and thoughts.

Primary data for the study were obtained from semi - structured interviews that took place in two marinas in the Algarve region – Lagos and Olhão – where boats stayed in the water and in two boatyards – Faro and Olhão – where boats were lifted onto the shore for maintenance. The objectives of the research were formally presented to the managers of these marinas and boatyards, and all the necessary approvals and formal permissions were obtained from them.

The interviews were conducted following a previously prepared script containing questions and themes suggested by the literature on topics such as sociodemographic and travel characteristics (Jennings, 2003); lifestyle (Stebbins, 1997); relationships of yacht cruisers with nature and with the local population (Lusby and Anderson, 2008, 2010; Macbeth, 2010); and users' opinion and suggestions on destination facilities' development specifically for yacht cruising (Koth, 2015).

An informal conversation with potential respondents was the starting point of the interview process. The interviewees were provided with information about the research goals and given the choice to volunteer for the study. This article doesn't involve the collection or processing of any sensitive personal data. However, informed consent, anonymity and confidentiality were ensured during both the interviewing process and the data presentation. Hence, it doesn't involve any ethical issues. The interviews were conducted in English and recorded digitally. The overall duration of the interviews was between 20 and 60 minutes. Some interviews were conducted with couples due to the characteristics of this way of travelling and the participants' choice.

2.3. Sample.

In the current research, the purposive sampling method, more precisely homogeneous sampling (Ritchie, Lewis, & Elam, 2003), was used to select interviewees with the same characteristics. The selection criteria were based on the definition of a yacht cruiser. Therefore, the interviewees had to own a recreational sailing or motorboat, engage in sailing for travel purposes, and be travelling for an extended period.

In total, 21 individuals (14 men and seven women) were interviewed, and six interviews were paired. Therefore, it was decided to consider a total of 15 interviews.

2.4. Data Analysis.

The recorded conversations were manually transcribed from audio into text. The responses to the sociodemographic and travel characteristics were analysed using descriptive statistics techniques. The files in text format were then subjected to qualitative content analysis utilising NVivo 9 (QSR International, 2010), and the topics were coded by themes and subthemes.

3. Results.

3.1. Sociodemographic and Travel Characteristics.

All the participants were foreigners, being British (n=15), German (n=5), or Dutch (n=1). The age of the majority was over 50 years, mainly in the range between 60 and 70. Own or family savings, pension, renting out of a property, employment, and business were mentioned as the income sources during the travel. Although several respondents (n=4) reported that they had been involved in sailing-related jobs (e.g., sailing instructor or boat builder), the more significant part did not have a profession related to sailing (e.g., engineer or accountant).

The following six dimensions were used to categorise the yacht cruisers: boat type, number of people aboard, duration of the trip, duration of the stay in the Algarve, travel geographies, and the place where the interview was conducted. Table 1 shows an overview of the interviewees' characteristics.

Table 1: An overview of the interviewee's characteristics.

People abroad (number sailors by number of occurrences	Duration of the travel (number of years by number of occurrences)	Length of cruising in Algarve (Number of years by number of occurrences)	Travel geography (Location by number of occurrences)
1 sailor – 6	0.5/3 – 6	<1 – 10	Europe – 7
	5/7 – 3	>1 – 5	Europe and beyond – 8
2 sailors – 10	>11 - 6		
more than 2 sailors – 2			
occasionally with family or friends – 6			
occasionally with a hired crew - 1			
n= 25	n= 15	n=15	n=15

Source: Author.

Most of the interviewees were travelling in a sailing boat with one (n=6) or two people (n=10) aboard and occasionally with family or friends (n=6). Regarding the duration of the trip, none of the interviewees had travelled for less than half a year. The "yachties" said that they are very different from "holidaymakers" and "charter sailors" because of the time spent on the boat. The table above shows that some of the interviewees have been travelling and living on a boat for over 30 years. It should be clarified that, usually, during their travel time, some made pauses from two weeks per year to some years, as quoted by some of them: "At the most, we spend eleven and a half months on the boat. And we go home maybe just for two weeks" (Sailor Couple 1); "I had four years, and then, of course, we bought another boat, on a basis, not quite full-time, and then we picked up on sailing. Prior to that, we lived on a boat for five years" (Sailor 2).

The most common length of time that the yacht tourists spent in the Algarve region is less than a year (n=10), starting from a couple of days. Those were passing by Portugal on the way to another country. As mentioned by some of the respondents, the Algarve is a good place to sail:

I had big plans to go around the world. Then, when I came here (after cruising in the Mediterranean), I said why? The weather is good, the places to sail are nice, and it's cheap. If

you are a pensioner and don't have any extra, then it's a good life. (Sailor 4)

The interviewees expressed a kind of travel seasonal pattern – active sailing with multiple moorings in the summer and more passive cruising during the winter with the return to one location. As they highlighted:

I came down to the Algarve in 2005 but usually go home for Christmas for two weeks. I should be here for the rest of the winter, and then in the spring, I will go to Spain, Huelva, and places like that. (Sailor 3)

Regarding travel geographies, half of the interviewees travelled only around the European coasts, namely in the Mediterranean, the North Sea, and the eastern part of the North Atlantic Ocean. The other half ventured further, from the Atlantic to the Pacific Ocean. Some travellers undertook cruises around the world.

3.2. Motivations.

Often, a combination of motives explains why people choose to engage in yacht cruising. As reported by Sailor Couple 1: [There are] "lots of different reasons. Because you have some people who, like us, just like travelling, there are some people who love sailing, and some people who love to live on a boat". The other interviewees gave similar descriptions of their motivations; therefore, the results will be presented in three categories: *sailing*, *travelling*, and *living*.

3.2.1. Sailing.

Most interviewees had in common the experience of sailing in their childhood. Some started sailing in small boats with their friends and family on local rivers or lakes. Others participated in ocean cruising on larger vessels with their parents. There were mentions of the acquisition of skills and the "love of the sea" obtained at an early age. As pointed out by an interviewee:

My father loved sailing. When I grew up, we had small boats, where you only have one or two persons, sailing boats. My father had friends with a big boat, so when I was about 16, we went on a trip to the Mediterranean. (Sailor 5)

Some interviewees developed their childhood hobby into a profession. Earning their livelihood in an environment surrounded by boats and people who shared the same interest in sailing motivated them to pursue their desire to travel by boat in their time free from work or after retirement.

When I was a small boy, from the height of a steering wheel, I looked at the sea from our house, you could throw a stone into the water, into the sea. So, I have always been around the boats, my family had a boat. At about your age (early 20s), I joined a yacht club and sailed dinghies, then I sailed bigger boats, and then I crewed people on their boats. And then eventually, I had enough money, and I bought my own boat. This is the fourth boat that I have now. (Sailor 6)

The previous experience of sailing often developed a "dream" or a "project" of buying a boat, and cruising became a self-fulfilling idea, as stated by Sailor 2:

When I was very young, I knew that I was going to sail long distances, and after the children had grown up, I took this

opportunity. And yes, that is what I have done. So yes, that was a life project in determination from the age of 16. I planned and guided my life to accommodate that.

3.2.2. Travelling.

Travelling was another great motivation for the participants in this study. The yacht sailors mentioned that they wanted to "go around the world" (Sailor 4) or "get to know local people and communities" (Sailor 7). The yacht cruisers were motivated by this particular type of travel, mentioning that it is "adventurous", "exciting", "allows you to gain skills", and "keeps you young". As they stated: "unpredictable, fun, challenging, it brings a lot of emotions. So, it's quite beautiful when you're on the water. This is an escape; anything people do rather than just watching is good fun" (Sailor Couple 2).

3.2.3. Living.

The interviews contained information about motivations to change the entire way of life through sailing and living on a boat. Some sacrificed their jobs, property, friends, and home country to be able to cruise.

We suddenly decided to do that before we were too old, and then we quit our jobs, sold our house, and sold everything. Now we just have the boat and nothing else. And that was it. (Sailor Couple 3)

Although not all the interviewees' initial motivation was to live permanently on a boat, they all considered this type of travel to be more a way of life than just a trip. Moreover, sometimes, there was a complex of motivational factors that could change during the journey, for example starting the journey to see the world and continuing it with the newly emerged dream of an entire lifestyle change. As a last note, some female interviewees admitted that, besides the mentioned motives, they followed their husband's dream of yacht cruising. This may be because all the interviewed female yachties were sailing in a couple, and our research had no individual female sailors.

3.3. Lifestyle.

All the interviewees considered this type of travel as a *way of life*. The most distinctive characteristics of the cruising way of life were organised into three main categories: *freedom*, *sense of community*, and *rewarding life*.

3.3.1. Freedom.

Freedom was a common characteristic of the lifestyle pointed out by the yacht cruisers and was described as the possibility to make their own decisions:

The most significant advantage is that you are your own boss. You decide what to do, you go to a place, and if you meet other people you like, you may stay longer. If you don't like the atmosphere at that time, then you pull up the anchor and go somewhere else. I find the beauty in it. Being free, the boss of your destiny. (Sailor 4)

Such expressions as "freedom to move", "mobility", "always moving", and "constantly on the move" appeared during most of the conversations with the sailors. People described a

lifestyle in which they could manage time on their own: "When we were cruising, we were anchoring in one harbour and, if we want, we could go to another one, so it's relaxing and freedom to decide whether to go or stay" (Sailor Couple 4).

"Economic freedom" was also mentioned as a big part of this lifestyle. As Sailor 3 pointed out, "It is just an idea, to be completely free, to have no pressure anymore, to forget money, to forget your job, everything". This is due to the fact that life on a boat, for all the interviewees, was less expensive than life in a house. Life on a boat was also referred to as "simple". People were not keen on luxurious products; they expressed no need to buy home decorations and stated that they own very few new clothes.

3.3.2. Sense of Community.

The yacht cruisers reported that they feel a sense of community, calling it a "sea community" or "sailing community". Socialisation with sailing fellows and locals seems to be very important to them. "Being very sociable" and "with a lot of friends" are expressions that were often used in their responses: "We help each other. If people see something broken on your boat, people will come, and we will do that as well. There is a very, very good community" (Sailor Couple 1).

This sense of community is not restricted to people who stay in the same marina or boatyard but extends to people whom sailors meet during their trips.

We have many friends. That is what we call a sailing community, thousands of them, and we do a sea-cross, and then maybe two years later, we meet up with someone again . . . here, we all get together. We help one another with the boat and various other things. We are glad that we've stopped and come over. (Sailor Couple 5)

The respondents referred to the other sailors of this so-called community as "helpful", "genuine", "kind", "very friendly", "open-minded", "charming", "incredible", "interesting", and "relaxed". They share "common interests", "worries and concerns", "values", "views of life and environment", and "ideas about freedom". These sailors' community was described as altruistically helpful, meaning that they share experiences, knowledge, meals, and tools, and so on, giving advice without expecting anything in return. It was repeatedly mentioned that everyone is ready to help immediately with "no questions asked". The people described were said to have no class system or prejudices towards educational, occupational, or economic status.

3.3.3. Rewarding Life.

The interviewees highlighted that their lifestyle is beneficial for them. They often compared it with their previous lives without a boat, mentioning that, through yacht cruising, their life had improved, and they had fulfilled specific goals. Two married couples suggested that cruising together had tightened their marriage – "we learn to depend on each other", they said (Sailor Couples 2 and 6). Other sailors highlighted physical or mental health, in contrast to a passive daily life. Generally, an active lifestyle makes them feel younger and healthier.

It gives you something to do; you don't sit in front of the TV getting old. (Sailor 4)

Now, when we look back – because we have been doing it for 13 years – yes, we have done the right thing. We are more knowledgeable; we are not like many people in England: they are looking in, and we are looking out. (Sailor Couple 5)

3.4. Relationship with Nature and the Locals.

3.4.1. Relationship with Nature.

When talking about environmental issues, the interviewed yacht cruisers used the following expressions: "environmentally aware", "self-sufficient", "sustainable", "recycle", "environmentally friendly", and so on. As stated by Sailor Couple 6: "Well, I think we can say that we are self-sufficient. We can use the word sustainable. We have a solar panel; we use the motor only to enter the marinas and separate rubbish. We use the wind for sailing . . . ."; or by the Sailor 1:

When you are on the boat, you have to manage waste, your fuel, your food; it's a kind of microsystem. It's not like you turn on your tap water and wait for it to come. No, you have to take it. When you're on the land, those things are taken for granted.

Regarding their connection to nature, yacht cruisers described themselves as being "attached to", "connected with", and "in tune with" nature. They stated that they "love", "respect", "admire", and "worry about" nature.

3.4.2. Relationship with Locals.

Interaction with locals usually occurs when people enter marinas and visit bars, cafes or stores. Local people were described with the following characteristics: "nice", "friendly", "genuine", "open-minded", "warm", and "kind". Despite an interest in connecting with local people, the language barrier would most likely prevent them from communicating, as stated, for example, by Sailor Couple 3: "We couldn't make friends with the Portuguese because of the language. We liked each other very much but couldn't talk".

3.5. Services and Facilities.

The yacht cruisers admit the need for logistics where they stop. Some of them use the marinas or the boatyards for short periods (a couple of days or weeks), while others stay for more extended periods (e.g., the winter season or several seasons). Table 2 shows a list of the most needed services and facilities demanded by the interviewees.

Table 2: An overview of the interviewee's needs relating to services and facilities.

Needs related to	Services	Facilities
	− Water	− Marinas
	− Electricity	− Boatyards
	− Fuel	− Harbours
	− Safe and secure berthing place	
	− Technical support (mechanic, electrician, carpenter, steel welding, surface painting)	− Qualified personnel and special equipment
Boats	− Spare parts and tools	− Chandlers
		− Places to receive deliveries (post offices, marina/boatyard mail office)
	− Waste management	− Recycling services of domestic waste and used oils, pump out services
	− Physical needs (hygiene, food and water) and social needs	− Bathrooms and showers
		− Markets and stores
		− Cafes and bars
		− Hairdressing
Sailors		− Laundries
		− Wi-Fi or mobile internet
		− Organised entertainment (tours, walks, meals)
	− Transportation in land	− Car rental
		− Bus
		− Train
		− Airport
	− Knowledge	− Marina/boatyard reception with staff assistance
		− Printed booklets with general information about city/region/transport/language − Sailing courses
		− Local language courses

Source: Author.

The yacht cruisers stop in marinas to rest between crossings, explore the nearby cities, travel further inland, or even take a flight back home for some time as well as to meet their basic needs, such as those for water, electricity, and technical support. They use the boatyards for major part replacement, maintenance, and renewal.

If it's the summer, it's better to anchor; if it's winter, I prefer to be in the marina, but it's not always the case ... Sometimes, when we are here [in the boatyard of Olhão], we can order [boat parts] online because we have an address to send to. But when not in the marina, we go to the city shop. Obviously, we need supermarkets and chandlers to buy stuff for the boat, bars, and that sort of thing. (Sailor 8)

Water supply was mentioned in almost all the interviews as one of the prioritised needs, for example: "Water! We need water on the go, we fill the tank, and we also need drinking water. We always have to buy a lot of water" (Sailor Couple 3).

Logically, it is the water. Unless you have money to stay in a marina, it's water. So, we are always ensuring we have filled the boat, just in case we have bad weather, and we can't go off and have water aboard. (Sailor Couple1)

The services needed for boat maintenance are mechanics, electricians, carpenters, steel welding, and surface painting. Some sailors stated that they did not require technical assistance, while others were less skilled and needed technical support from professionals. As stated by Sailor 4: "I don't know much about technology and electricity, so I need a mechanic and electrician. Sometimes I need a carpenter. Sometimes, you have to replace something".

Even though some sailors are skilled enough to repair their boats, all require spare parts and, sometimes, specific tools. Several solutions were mentioned to solve these problems: buying from local chandlers or buying online using delivery services.

Yes, chandler is up in town there. I would not necessarily use them for big items. Portugal is expensive for boat parts. It's more expensive than in Spain. I would be and I am sure everybody else is careful of what you buy in Portugal because your taxes are high on that. Most of the items I get from England are ordered on the internet. If I need something big, I will go to Spain and buy it and come back. Even if I need one journey or two, it would be much cheaper. (Sailor 2)

The yacht cruisers highlighted that there are chandlers around the big marinas, such as the Marina of Lagos, but it is difficult to find parts for boats near other cities along the Algarve coast. Therefore, people prefer to return home for the needed pieces or use delivery services. Sailor Couple 5, talking about the need for yachting facilities in the Algarve, stated:

There is not big support for yachting. There is no chandler. The best one is in Lagos. So, the support specifically for the boats is poor, but the infrastructure is good, the airport, the supermarkets and so on ...

The need for showers and toilet facilities ashore was frequently mentioned. Markets, supermarkets, and grocery stores near the sea were highlighted as important for food and hygiene products. All yachts are equipped with kitchens, so the sailors cook their meals aboard.

The interviewees favoured cafes and bars around the mooring areas; they mentioned spending evenings in bars talking to other sailors and local people. Other facilities, such as laundry, the Internet, and waste management, were also mentioned. Long-term yacht cruisers constantly communicate with their families and friends back home and expressed the need for Wi-Fi or mobile internet.

Many of the sailors expressed an interest in exploring the interior of Portugal. Some of them opt to use public transportation to travel inland, but others highlighted the need for car rental in proximity to the berthing places, which was frequently mentioned.

If we had a car, that meant we could go inland. This is one of the bad things about sailing: you don't get a chance to go deep into the country, so having a car is a good thing; it helps. (Sailor Couple 5)

The sailors pointed out a significant advantage of the availability of an airport in the region. Almost everyone mentioned that they fly back to their home country at least once per year. Several sailors, suggested that Portuguese language courses would be helpful for them because they wanted to know more about the people and culture.

Conclusions.

The profile of a typical yacht cruiser travelling along the Algarve coasts in Portugal was found to be quite similar to that identified in the earlier studies conducted in the Pacific Ocean (Jennings, 1999; Koth, 2015) and the Caribbean (Lusby & Anderson, 2008, 2010), which does not seem to have changed during the last two decades. A substantial number of yacht cruisers are of mature age and financially secure – retired or with private savings – which provides them with a way of subsistence during long-term travel (Jennings, 1999; Koth, 2015; Lusby & Anderson, 2008, 2010).

Yacht cruisers travel slowly, some even for two to three decades. The length of time spent cruising in the Algarve could reach many months, which strengthens the suggestion of Perna et al. (2008) about nautical tourists' long stay and sustainability for the region in comparison with golf tourism or sun and sea tourism. Jugovic´ et al. (2011) also highlighted that yacht tourism guarantees between 180 and 210 days per year in the destination.

The lives of the yachties studied in the current research were found to be in line with the "lifestyle mobilities" concept of Cohen, Duncan, and Thulemark (2015, p. 159), which consists of "ongoing semipermanent moves of varying durations". Yacht cruisers' way of life differs from both temporary mobility and permanent migration due to the involvement of multiple places of stay, a possible return to home(s), fixed belonging to a boat rather than to any physical location, variations in the duration of stay, multi-transitional and ongoing frequency of travel, some seasonality-based variations, and multiple reoccurrences throughout the life cycle.

Some sailors started cruising in early childhood following the example or motivation of their parents; consequently, the interviewees experienced the benefits of an active lifestyle in their senior age. Stebbins's (1982) concept of "serious leisure" states that people are often motivated by the career-like importance of their leisure time, so they tend to pursue a self-fulfilling idea of success associated with a particular performance or achievement. According to several studies, the encouragement of physical activities from a young age contributes to lifelong activeness, decreases the risk of diseases, and improves mental well-being

The study presents some of the touristic motivational factors of yachters based on the travel career ladder (TCL) approach (Pearce & Lee, 2005), particularly novelty, escape, autonomy, nature, self-development by the host site, stimulation, self-actualisation, nostalgia, and relationship. Positive sailing experiences of the past were responsible for creating a requirement to satisfy the needs for nostalgia, self-actualisation, or self-fulfilling ideas. Further explaining those motivational factors, mostly by the process of travelling, were pictured motivations to obtain new experiences, to develop knowledge of local places and people, and to be stimulated by adventures. A desire to change a lifestyle was subjected to the escape and autonomy factors. The responses of some women showed a relationship motivation or, in other words, a sense of belonging to a sailing partner, as described earlier by Jennings (1999).

Despite the yacht cruisers' strong attachment to the ocean and the sailing process, according to Lusby and Anderson (2010), sailing is not the core reason for cruising but more a way to achieve the main goal – an alternative lifestyle. The current study suggests that cruisers seek to escape from Western society's routines by chasing the idea of freedom, which contributes to Macbeth's (2010) thoughts about the "utopian" character of of yacht cruising. Regarding the relationship between cruising and serious leisure (Stebbins, 1982), active participation implies the acquisition of sailing knowledge, sailing abilities, and experiences.

The current study found that the active and adventurous

character of travel is an important part of the everyday life of sailors. Moreover, highlighted the importance of active and sailing childhood for the process. Furthermore, yachting experience rewards them with the development of skills and improvement of personal characteristics. Brown (2016) suggested that the yacht cruising experience requires "enskilment" (becoming skilful through active engagement). In a broader context, the research results resemble those reported by Lusby and Anderson (2008) in such a way that it assumes that this alternative lifestyle brings physical and psychological well-being. Travelling on a sailing yacht implies interaction with fellow sailors; even solo sailors are not alone because they tend to communicate among themselves, as a "community", and with the local communities (Higham & Hinch, 2009).

The present research further provides confirmation of the lifestyle of this subculture and presents some of its distinctive characteristics. Regarding the sense of community Koth (2015) and the current study identified social connections as a distinctive characteristic of yacht cruisers. This sense of community can be interpreted with the help of the concept of *communitas*, which was initially proposed in the context of Cultural Anthropology. This concept designates the emergence of spontaneous intimate connections among people, the blurring of statutory distinctions and social hierarchies, and the emergence of a strong feeling of communion between participants, a state of temporary equality (Wang, 1999).

Yacht cruisers fit into what Wang (1999, p. 358), following Martin Heidegger's existential philosophy, called the search for *existential authenticity*: "a special state of Being in which one is true to oneself, and acts as a counter pose to the loss of 'true self' in public roles and public spheres in modern Western society". In this regard, the main characteristics of these travellers validate the model proposed by Wang of existential authenticity seeking applied to travel, leisure and sport tourism.

This research also consolidates the idea that yacht cruisers respect and care for nature, have environmentally sustainable intentions, and express concerns about environmental degradation (Lusby & Anderson, 2010; Macbeth, 2010). Moreover, the current study suggests the need for further research on the environmental awareness and attitudes of yacht cruisers. The social impacts of yacht tourists are even less well studied (Jennings, 2003) and should be analysed by destinations' managers in line with the *sustainability consciousness* advocated by Gericke, Boeve-de Pauw, Berglund, and Olsson (2019).

Yacht sailors contribute to local economies through the use of infrastructures (marinas, boat yards, stores, restaurants, and supply companies) and services (boat-oriented suppliers, maintenance and repair, and insurance). The characteristics of this way of travel define certain needs associated with boating (e.g., a safe place to stop, spare parts, maintenance support, and chandlers), but yacht cruisers have personal needs too (e.g., food and water provision, socialisation, and entertainment). This study showed that the destination could not totally fulfil their needs. However, Portugal defines nautical tourism as one of the 10 most valuable tourist products, displaying its benefits for the country (European Commission, 2013). The National Tourism Strategy 2017–2027 (Portugal Tourism Board, 2017) affirms

the connection between tourism and the sea economy, prioritising the development of infrastructures, equipment, and services for nautical tourism. The dynamization and valorisation of infrastructures, equipment, and services in support of nautical tourism, namely ports, marinas, and nautical centres, are mentioned among the priorities of the Algarve region planned for the years 2017–2027 (Portugal Tourism Board, 2017).

This research is pioneering in terms of studying the Sociology of yacht cruisers who stop by the Algarve coasts, and it has verified some of their profile characteristics as well as their recommendations for meeting yacht cruisers' needs better in terms of services and facilities. Destination developers, leisure and sport tourism managers, and marketing specialists should consider that yachties take part of the worldwide growing senior leisure and tourism sector as they usually present a mature age. Yacht cruisers travel slowly and prefer to stay in harbours or boatyards throughout the entire wintertime, which can help the seasonality reduction in the region. Moreover, the length of time spent cruising in the Algarve could reach many months, and the long stay strengthens the importance of this target for regional sustainability in comparison with golf tourism or sun and sea tourism. The attraction of these travellers may also signify a more sustainable use of maritime resources. There is a range of motivations that reinforce the choice to travel to different countries. The active nature of sailing itself can push individuals to follow sailing with serious leisure dedication. Conjointly, they have a variety of touristic motivational factors, such as novelty, escape, autonomy, nature, self-development, stimulation, self-actualisation, and relationships. Finally, they are motivated to change their way of life, migrate in terms of physical location, and alter their mindset away from Western societies.

Chasing freedom and a better quality of life, yacht cruisers move towards an 'utopian lifestyle'. The sailing subculture is composed not only of voyage partners and local communities but also of all people who share the same values and interests in recreational sailing. Besides the social character of this lifestyle, participants in yacht cruising noted the physical and mental welfare gained by the activity, constant learning, and dealing with excitement throughout the travel.

The yacht cruisers highlighted the importance of the infrastructures and facilities in host destinations, which could contribute to developing local economies. Yacht cruising affects and promotes the development of numerous service business activities that are directly or indirectly related to their needs.

Besides theoretical knowledge on the subject of contemporary mobility and lifestyles, this study produced practical information about yacht cruisers' needs that may be applied within the scope of public policies and marketing strategies, not only concerning generic guidelines but also in relation to the leveraging of the Algarve's image as a sustainable nautical tourism destination. The knowledge about motivation and lifestyle created by this study is compelling for both the consolidation of theories and their implementation into regional policies. Moreover, this study provides interesting data for other destinations as these yachters move to other geographies.

Future research should focus on gender issues. Jennings (1999) and Koth (2015) suggested that the reasons for travel and lifestyle of yachties can differ significantly under the explanatory variable of gender. Thus, comparative studies of female and male sailors should attract academic interest.

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