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Casa Doze: An assessment of the feasibility of opening a holistic tourism space in Mafra

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Abstract

This master's project delves into the realms of holistic tourism, wellness tourism, and the tourism industry's evolving landscape through the lens of sustainability. With a specific focus on the Mafra region in Portugal, the study aims to address three primary objectives: firstly, to comprehensively explore the existing literature and conceptual foundations of holistic and wellness tourism; secondly, to assess how the tourism industry is aligning with wellness concepts and identify emerging trends in wellness tourism; and finally, to evaluate the feasibility of establishing a sustainable holistic tourism venue named Casa Doze in the Mafra region.

The study starts by establishing the theoretical framework, highlighting the interconnectedness of holistic tourism, wellness, and sustainability. It underscores the pursuit of holistic well-being, encompassing its different dimensions, within the context of contemporary society. With the tourism industry increasingly recognizing this pursuit, the study attempts to shed light on how tourism can contribute to individual well-being. In the practical exploration, the study turns its attention to Portugal and, more specifically, the Mafra region, which exhibits burgeoning potential as a holistic tourism hub. A meticulous examination of the current holistic tourism landscape in Mafra substantiates the viability of the Casa Doze project. This section also draws on insights derived from interviews with key stakeholders in the holistic tourism industry, providing valuable perspectives on challenges, priorities, and future trends. While the study achieves its objectives, certain limitations are acknowledged. These include a limited sample for interviews and the absence of an in-depth financial analysis for the Casa Doze project.

To conclude, this study serves as a foundational exploration of the dynamic interplay between holistic tourism, wellness, and sustainability. It aims to contribute to the broader narrative of enhancing well-being and personal transformation in the evolving landscape of the tourism industry.

Keywords: wellness, holistic tourism, well-being, sustainable tourism, holistic tourism venue feasibility in Mafra

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Chapter 1: Introduction

What we anticipate in our destinations is not holiness or divine visions but something even more miraculous: the opportunity to feel different from the way we feel at home. It is as if the act of travelling to a certain place in the world entitles us to feel happier and more alive (Chaline, 2001).

More than 2400 years ago, Hippocrates laid the groundwork for the development of a scientific approach to health and medicine, based on the concepts of observation, diagnosis, and treatment. Since then, health and well-being have been looked at mainly from a single-dimensional point of view, where physical and mental wellness convey the absence of disease and illness, leaving little space for anything in between these two opposed poles. In the meantime, while concurrent advances in science and medicine have improved physical preservation and increased the absence of sickness, mental, psychological, and emotional issues are frequently not handled (Smith & Kelly, 2006b). While there are more and more treatments for depression, the problem is rising, not falling (Jowit, 2018), and the COVID-19 pandemic intensified this with a significant and broad influence on the mental health of people everywhere (Boden et al., 2021). Modern-day society, particularly in the Westernized and more developed countries, has reached a point where the burdens of its busy and often hectic lifestyle are being reflected in people's health, and there is an increasing urge to transform one's way of living into a more conscious and balanced one. The drive for an alternative to the *status quo* of health and lifestyle brought the concepts of wellness and well-being to the spotlight, and in 1959, Dr. Halbert Dunn first proposed the idea of 'holistic wellness'. Introducing a new concept of health that included not merely the body but also the environment, the mind, and the spirit, Dunn (1959) referred to this state as 'high-level wellness'. Arguably, there is a clear need for a more holistic and conscious approach to the way we live our lives and nurture ourselves. Unsurprisingly, the tourism industry recognized this trend and in recent years the pursuit of wellness has intensified to a level never before seen in the industry's history (Smith & Kelly, 2006b). Conceptually, one can include Wellness Tourism as being part of the larger field of Holistic Tourism, which in turn encompasses the broader sector of Transformational Tourism, a concept fairly explored by many academics and private business owners alike. The interconnectedness of individual transformation with one's holistic well-being is a fascinating one, and the tourism industry has been showing

signs of understanding this relationship and providing offer that tap into it. This was the drive for conducting this feasibility study and examining first on a theoretical and then on a practical level how can tourism contribute to one's well-being.

1.1: Structure of this study

This study is organized to provide a thorough exploration of holistic tourism and its feasibility in the Mafra region of Portugal. It consists of two major sections that are comprised of several chapters, each contributing to a comprehensive understanding of the research. The first section is titled Theoretical Approach and is subdivided into two chapters: “Chapter 2: Transformational Tourism”, which delves into the concept of transformational tourism, elucidating its significance and relevance within the broader travel industry; and “Chapter 3: Holistic Tourism and Wellness: Conceptual Framework”, which comprehensively defines holistic tourism and wellness, exploring their intricate relationship. This chapter also delves into the dimensions of wellness and offers insights into future trends in this domain.

The second section is titled *Feasibility of a Holistic Tourism Venue in the Region of Mafra, Portugal* and approaches the practicalities, opportunities, and challenges of opening a holistic tourism venue in the region of Mafra. It is composed of four chapters: “Chapter 4: Holistic & Wellness Tourism Characterization of Portugal with a Focus on the Region of Mafra”, which provides an overview of holistic tourism in Portugal, giving particular attention to Mafra as an emerging hub for such offerings. Within this chapter, the feasibility of establishing a holistic venue in this region is assessed, and the concept of Casa Doze, a holistic venue, is introduced; “Chapter 5: Methodology” outlines the research methodology employed throughout the study, emphasizes the use of qualitative research methods, and provides detailed insights into the design of the interview script; “Chapter 6: Findings” is dedicated to presenting the research findings. This includes an exploration of the motivations and experiences of tourists, an analysis of challenges and priorities for retreat space owners, insights into marketing perspectives, and an examination of the current state of the industry; finally, “Chapter 7: SWOT Analysis and Strategies for the Establishment of a Holistic Tourism Venue” conducts a SWOT analysis that evaluates the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats related to holistic tourism in Mafra, while also outlining a strategic roadmap with recommendations for the establishment of Casa Doze.

The study concludes with a summarization of the theoretical and practical findings, acknowledging the limitations of the study and encouraging further research on the topic of holistic tourism.

Section I: Theoretical Approach

Chapter 2: Transformational Tourism

Travel and tourism have long been linked with transformation (Allon & Koleth, 2014; Crossley, 2012; Lean, 2012; MacCannell, 2013), and their power to transform lives has been compared to therapy (Kottler, 1998) and education (Reisinger, 2013). Ross (2010) argues that when approached in a mindful way, travel may be a broadly available, individually tailored, and delightful chance to develop self-awareness, spiritual experience, and an expansion of consciousness. Kottler (1998) asserts that no human activity has a greater ability to change one's perceptions or the way one lives. He was the first to use the concept of transformative travel in an academic context and described it as a process motivated by intellectual curiosity, emotional yearning, or physical challenge, as the realisation of something lacking (Kottler, 1997). Robertson (2002) refers to it as the outcome of a process that begins with an encounter that does not conform to the traveller's expectations, worldviews, assumptions, or cultural paradigms. Ross (2010) provides an interesting and more recent conceptualization: sustainable travel embarked upon by the traveller for the primary and intentional purpose of creating conditions conducive to one or more fundamental structures of the self to transform, and in her opinion, to be considered transformative travel, the transformation must be intentional on the part of the traveller. Reisinger (2013) defined transformational tourism as tourism that delivers "very rich and very deep sensual and emotional transformational experiences that enable people to achieve their full potential as unique and authentic human beings" (p. 31). With the aim of summarizing a myriad of approaches to transformational tourism, Nandasena et al. (2022) defined it as the consequence of self-reflective processes among visitors as a result of memorable encounters, resulting in changes in their perspective on the outside world, changes in their daily behaviours and/or thinking bodily changes, and changes in how they interact with others. Independently of the definition or the approach, what we can arguably affirm is that tourism has indeed a great power to act as a driver for transformation, and it is worth exploring the different ways in which this transformation might occur.

Nowadays, throngs of tourists visit India to learn various Eastern meditation techniques, push their physical and mental boundaries while surfing or canoeing, go on pilgrimages to Compostela or Mount Kailash, travel the world while backpacking, attend

courses or conferences on Kabbalah or integral theory, experiment with shamanism and sacred plants in Peru or Mexico, engage in volunteer or missionary tourism, or visit powerful sites like the Stonehenge (Robledo & Batle, 2017). But if we reflect on it, the idea of transformative travel is not very novel. The earliest transformative travellers were probably religious pilgrims, and the Grand Tour or the hippy spiritual treks are unmistakable forerunners of this new phenomenon. The difference is that many of the things they sought back then are now widely accessible. Why then is this kind of tourism growing? Social factors are undoubtedly significant. As Robledo & Batle (2017) suggest, consumer society has persuaded us that our pleasure depends on fulfilling material goals and ambitions. Because of this, many people mistakenly associate pleasure, satisfaction, and the euphoria that comes from material possessions and amusement with genuine happiness. Existential emptiness, a typical illness of rampant consumerism, is frequently the outcome. The human desire for fulfilment and purpose serves as a stimulus for transformational tourism experiences, and ideologies that limit tourism to ‘pleasure travel’ oversimplify this nuanced aspect of human nature. Iso-Ahola (1997) indicated that seeking and escaping are the two primary motivational factors for leisure. Escapism plays a significant role in many popular kinds of travel, but when it comes to transformative experiences seeking is usually the main drive. Arguably, authenticity is also closely linked to the concept of seeking, and Wang (1999) suggested that, in essence, transformational travellers are searching for an existential authenticity. As an activity-related circumstance, existential authenticity explains a wider range of visitor experiences than ideas connected to objects (such as objective and constructive authenticities) and it is unquestionably essential for transformative tourism (Wang, 1999).

Many tourism typologies have been linked to transformative travel experiences, including eco-tourism, voluntourism, religious and pilgrimage tourism, backpacker and adventure tourism, cultural and heritage tourism, dark tourism, and wellness and yoga tourism (Nandasena et al., 2022). The relevant fields for the elaboration of this study are holistic tourism and wellness tourism, which are where we are going to focus our attention.

Chapter 3: Holistic Tourism and Wellness: Conceptual Framework

3.1 - Holistic Tourism: seeking the path rather than the destination

A man travels the world over in search of what he needs and returns home to find it.

(George Moore, 1852- 1933)

It was argued before that we are unsatisfied with the materialistic, spiritually sterile lives we have built for ourselves in capitalist Western cultures and have no desire to partake in comparable endeavours overseas. Following this line, Smith (2003) suggests that what many of us desire these days is either travel for self-improvement or escape from the stress and routine of our daily lives. Cohen (1996) distinguishes between various traveller goals and experiences and groups them into the following categories: recreational, diversionary, experiential, experimental, and existential. While the first three types of travellers are primarily escaping monotony, boredom, or isolation, they may not be anticipating finding purpose elsewhere. Experimental travellers, on the other hand, look for spiritual centres in many, alternate directions. They frequently consist of younger 'post-modern travellers' who spend some time in spiritual communities, but they can also include ageing hippies from the 1960s and 1970s who never left the location or, more and more frequently, burnt-out recovering professionals in their mid-thirties. Arguably, this type of 'eternal drifter' traveller - for whom the act of searching itself might become a way of life - might be missing the essence of the benefits that can be given by holistic tourism. Conversely, existential travellers have the propensity to dedicate their lives to a single spiritual location, either permanently dwelling there or making periodic trips there as a form of personal pilgrimage. Munt (1994) also uses the term "egotourists" to describe younger, frequently eco-aware visitors who experiment with alternative lifestyles and seek approval from their peers for their 'right-on' behaviour, falling again into the escapist trap that these types of travel experiences can represent. Although holistic tourism may provide the opportunity to do exactly that, it certainly is more than simply a means of escaping reality. Many holistic travellers depart to face the same issues that other travellers are only too pleased to leave behind since they appear to want self-improvement rather than self-avoidance. In contrast to pretending to be others, holistic travellers are frequently more interested in "finding" their genuine selves rather than acting in a hedonistic, liminal manner that is typical of mass tourists. Given the seeming blurring of the lines between leisure and daily life (McCabe, 2002), it is not unexpected that more and more people are utilizing travel as a way to enhance their home

lives, rather than simply escaping them, and this is where holistic tourism begins to play its part. Although it is questionable to what extent a transient phenomenon may significantly impact long-term well-being, tourism can undoubtedly contribute to several of the previously mentioned elements of wellness (Smith & Kelly, 2006b), which is why so many tourists use travelling as a driver for change.

It is challenging to estimate the growth of holistic tourism, not least since many of the businesses involved in it are small-scale businesses that almost entirely rely on the Internet to market their services. Furthermore, as we will explore in more detail further ahead in this study, the market of wellness tourism, such as health, spa, and beauty products and services is gradually overlapping with the holistic industry (Smith & Kelly, 2006a), making it additionally more demanding to define the boundaries for the holistic tourism market and objectively assess its growth. Nonetheless, Smith & Kelly (2006a) suggest that it can be defined as visiting a place that offers a variety of activities and/or therapies geared toward fostering, preserving, and enhancing the body, mind, and soul, stating that it covers the largest range of experiences, which can range from weekend spa getaways with massages to intense month-long yoga retreats in impoverished settings in South and South-east Asia.

Arguably, spirituality is one of the dimensions more easily associated with holistic tourism, perhaps due to the metaphor of travelling as akin to a spiritual journey to self-discovery. Graburn (2002) explains how travel may be used to reconcile the inner and outward trip, or the inner world of consciousness and the outer world of experience, and indeed we can identify a broad range of activities that can be found in holistic tourism offers that aim precisely at the attunement of mind, body, and soul. A summarisation of some of these activities can be found in Table 2 below.

Table 2 - Holistic Activities

- **Therapeutic** (e.g., spas, thalassotherapy, massage, shiatsu, aromatherapy, acupuncture, osteopathy, chiropractic, hydrotherapy, kinesiology)
- **Healing** (e.g., reiki, reflexology, crystal healing, sound bathing)
- **Contemplative** (e.g., meditation, prayer, visualization)
- **Active** (e.g., yoga, pilates, tai chi, Alexander technique)
- **Creative** (e.g., painting, writing, drama, dance, music, colour therapy)

- **Enlightening** (e.g., pilgrimage, sacred sites, mystical landscapes)
- **Interactive** (e.g., volunteering, community engagement, participation in rituals or festivals)
- **Personal development** (e.g., counselling, stress management, life coaching, neurolinguistic programming (NLP), astrology, Hoffman technique)
- **Medicinal** (e.g., ayurvedic treatments, herbalism, homoeopathy, Chinese medicine)

Note: Adapted from “Holistic Tourism: Journeys of the Self?” by Smith & Kelly, 2006a.

Tour operators and holistic facilitators may have more product packaging options if they group tourist habits and activities together rather than different categories of individuals (Edensor, 2001). For instance, certain businesses often provide a variety of activities in one location from which visitors can choose a fixed number, or bundle a set of activities that are then sold as a package. The offer of the latter usually comes in the form of retreat holidays, which is a niche of holistic tourism worth exploring and relevant to the study being performed in this paper.

A retreat may be described as a specially designed facility that houses visitors with the intention of teaching them about or helping them improve a body-mind activity (such as yoga or pilates) and/or learning about or getting complementary therapies or treatments while they are there. The only tourist or visitor activity that often occurs during a retreat is of a holistic character (Smith & Kelly, 2006a). Lea (2008) contends that the practice of withdrawing from daily life in order to relax and recover has a long history and the recent growing need to retreat comes in line with the loss of wellness previously discussed, but the escapist side of retreating is only a small share of the overall experience. The therapeutic process involves connecting with oneself and with nature, aiming to achieve a better understanding of our own mind and hopefully find ways to deal better with the problems of day-to-day life. But these connections may first be painful and unsettling even if they ultimately lead to healing (Lea, 2008), which underlines the dimension of diligence and commitment present in retreats as opposed to the escapist and hedonistic one. Theoretically, retreats provide ‘safe’ environments for personal growth, but this is not always the case—just as a pilgrimage is not necessarily a straightforward path to spirituality. According to Heintzman (2013), some visitors to retreat centres do so in order to cope with or get through

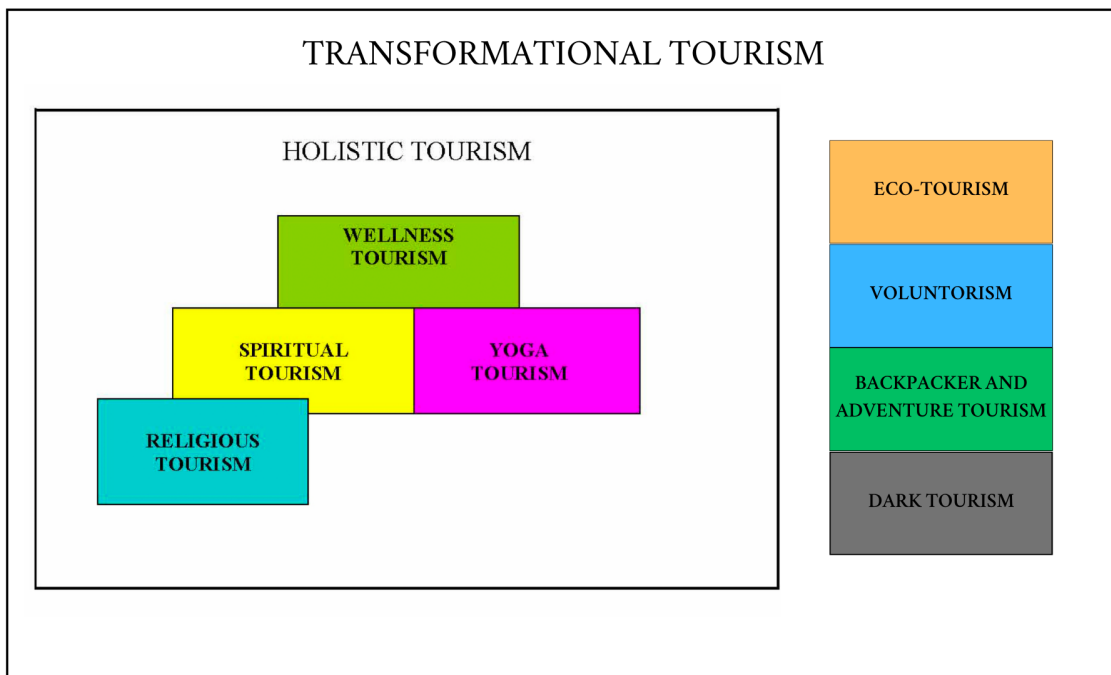
challenging life situations including critical diseases, failed relationships, or the loss of a loved one. Retreats can be categorised in a variety of ways, depending on the setting, the activities, the spiritual emphasis, etc. However, the literature and the actual vacations on offer to tourists make it very evident that the scope, depth, and breadth are exceedingly broad (Kelly & Smith, 2016).

3.2 - Wellness Tourism and Holistic Tourism: Two Related but Distinct Concepts

As we proceed with our exploration of holistic tourism, it is important to acknowledge that holistic tourism encompasses various dimensions of travel experiences, including wellness tourism. Holistic tourism, in this context, serves as a broader umbrella under which wellness tourism finds its place. Both holistic and wellness tourism share a common underlying theme—nurturing well-being and facilitating personal growth through travel—though they do so in distinctive ways. Within the holistic tourism framework, we examine the dynamic interplay between these two related yet distinct concepts. Through this lens, we aim to unveil their shared principles and values, all while recognizing the subtle differentiators that make each concept unique. Together, we will gain a deeper understanding of how these intertwined components contribute to the profound journey of self-improvement and well-being via the transformative medium of travel. Wellness tourism typically involves activities and services that promote physical and mental health, such as spa treatments, fitness classes, healthy eating, and stress reduction techniques. The goal is to help travellers relax, rejuvenate, and return home feeling better physically and mentally (Dini & Pencarelli, 2022), covering only partially the previously mentioned dimensions of wellness. Holistic tourism, on the other hand, takes a more comprehensive approach to well-being. In addition to physical health, holistic tourism also addresses spiritual, emotional, and social aspects of health. This can include practices such as yoga and meditation, visits to spiritual sites or retreat centres, and opportunities to connect with local cultures and communities. Both types of tourism have gained popularity in recent years as people become more health-conscious and seek to incorporate wellness practices into their daily lives (G. Rocha et al., 2016). However, it is important to note that the definitions and distinctions between these two types of tourism are not always clear-cut, and some travel experiences may incorporate elements of both. Overall, while wellness tourism may be more appealing to those looking for a physical and mental reset, holistic tourism may attract those seeking a more all-encompassing approach to wellness.

After distinguishing between these two types of tourism, one can arguably affirm that wellness tourism can conceivably be a branch of holistic tourism in the sense that it provides travellers with a narrower scope of activities that aim to enhance fewer dimensions of wellness when compared to holistic tourism. As the name suggests, holistic tourism approaches welfare in a more comprehensive and integrated way, thus encompassing more dimensions of wellness and well-being. This point of view is also presented by Smith & Kelly (2006a), who suggested a graphical representation to depict the various facets of holistic tourism and to help bring clarity to often blurry and overlapped concepts, acknowledging their commonalities while still assuring their differences. Figure 1 is a graphical adaption of the one suggested by the aforementioned authors that adds the concept of transformational tourism to the equation, aiming to smoothly interlink various concepts discussed so far in this study.

Figure 1 - Transformational Tourism & Holistic Tourism Interrelationships



Note: Adapted from “Holistic Tourism: Journeys of the Self?” by Smith & Kelly, 2006a.

As depicted in Figure 1, it becomes apparent that wellness tourism finds its place within the broader spectrum of holistic tourism. Wellness tourism, with its focus on specific aspects of well-being, represents one facet of the multifaceted experiences encompassed by holistic tourism. Holistic tourism, in turn, fits into the larger context of transformational tourism. This hierarchical view underscores the potential for each level to serve as a catalyst for personal transformation. In this framework, wellness tourism serves as a gateway to the

more comprehensive and integrated approach of holistic tourism, which, in embracing a wider range of dimensions of well-being, aligns with the transformative power inherent in the world of travel. Through this interconnected perspective, we gain insight into how each layer contributes to the overarching journey of self-discovery and growth that characterizes transformational tourism.

3.2.1 - Defining Wellness

If one takes into account the meticulous attention to well-being paid by Romans and Greeks, the quests for spiritual enlightenment of medieval pilgrims, or the medical seaside and spa tourism of the 18th and 19th-century European elite, wellness tourism is in many ways one of the oldest forms of tourism. But it could be argued that in recent years the quest for wellness has intensified to a level never before seen in history (Smith & Kelly, 2006), whether via a touristic standpoint or a generalized quest for wellness in one's daily life. As a result of the rising physical, moral, and spiritual 'damage' caused by urban life, wellness has seen a rebirth in modern culture (Weiler & Hall, 1992) and the demand for touristic offers that provide visitors with an experience based on their wellbeing has flourished. Notwithstanding, before delving into the area of wellness tourism, it will be useful to explore the concept of wellness in itself and the reasons behind its upsurge.

There is a myriad of viewpoints on what is wellness. The Global Wellness Institute defines wellness as the active pursuit of activities, choices, and lifestyles that lead to a state of holistic health (Global Wellness Institute, 2018). Some authors, like Steiner and Reisinger (2006), view it as a philosophical stance that forces people to face the true nature of life, including their impending mortality; for others, it is about personal growth and the balance of body, mind, and spirit (Lehto et al., 2006); it may be a spiritual, metaphysical quest (Pernecky & Johnston, 2006); or it may involve looking beyond the self in a spirit of altruism (Devereux & Carnegie, 2006). It may even include cosmetic surgery to improve psychological well-being by beautifying the physique, a perspective that allowed the conceptualization of medical tourism (Connell, 2011). However, there is one common area of agreement, which is that health no longer only refers to the physical nature of the body. Even when authors have concentrated on primarily physical activities (Puczkó & Bachvarov (2006) - spas; Pechlaner & Fischer (2006) - alpine relaxation; Lea (2006) - massage), they also mention the spiritual, psychological, or holistic aspects of the experiences.

Several other authors contribute with definitions that follow along with this comprehensive perspective of wellness. Ardell (1982) attributes more individual responsibility to wellness, affirming that it is first and foremost a choice to assume responsibility for the quality of one's life. He states that it begins with a conscious decision to shape a healthy lifestyle and that wellness is a mindset, a predisposition to adopt a series of key principles in varied life areas that lead to high levels of well-being and life satisfaction. Some other authors also impute a factor of authenticity to wellness stating that each person's definition of wellness is unique and exists along a spectrum: each individual defines health differently, meaning that instead of only focusing on a person's weight, blood pressure, or stress management skills, the entire person should be taken into consideration (Steiner & Reisinger, 2006). Transcendence is also a topic that appears in many explanations of wellness and is most frequently described in terms of spirituality. The National Wellness Institute (2020) suggest that in the spiritual aspect, people look for meaning and purpose in their lives. It involves gaining a profound understanding of the breadth and depth of life and natural forces that exist in the cosmos, where one will observe the surroundings on the wellness journey and the world around with admiration and awe as one starts to build the spiritual dimension of one's existence, and they remark that one should have numerous inquiries and learn to cherish things that are not fully intelligible. Kaam (1983) also explores spirituality and the idea that there is more to the world than what we can experience. He claims that spirituality emphasizes the experience of a relationship with the transcendent, a sense of unity with it, divine love experienced as affirmation that boosts one's self-worth and sense of worth, divine intervention or inspiration, the perception that life consists of more than just physical states, psychological emotions, and societal norms, the assumption that there is more to life than what one can see or truly grasp, and a sense of wholeness, inner harmony and peace. He states that spirituality answers existential concerns and enables gazing outside of oneself.

Nevertheless, when we start considering the spiritual element of wellness, it is rather important to underline the distinction between spirituality and religion. Although these concepts are often used interchangeably, they are two distinct notions with different meanings. Religion often refers to a body of beliefs, customs, and rites connected to a particular organization or group of people. Religion is frequently built on a system of doctrines or ideas that outline what is right or wrong, how one should live their life, and what happens when one dies. Religion can contain a structured framework for worship, a hierarchy

of authority, and regimented routines like prayer, rituals, and ceremonial observances (Pargament, 2001). On the other hand, spirituality is a more personalised and subjective notion that entails a personal search for life's meaning and purpose. It may be viewed as a journey towards the exploration of one's inner self and the development of a personal relationship with a higher power or force. Meditation, mindfulness, introspection, self-reflection, and the development of inner tranquillity are common spiritual activities (Mayer, 2000). One way to differentiate between religion and spirituality is by their emphasis: religion emphasises the external structure of worship, while spirituality emphasises the internal state of being (Hill & Pargament, 2003).

As we conclude this exploration into the multifaceted concept of wellness, it becomes evident that wellness is a deeply personal and intricate journey. It encompasses physical, mental, emotional, and even spiritual dimensions, each of which contributes to an individual's overall well-being. With these foundational concepts in mind, we turn our attention to the dimensions of wellness, where we delve deeper into the specific facets that constitute an integrated state of health. In the forthcoming chapter, we will examine these dimensions, exploring how they interconnect and play vital roles in the pursuit of wellness within the context of both daily life and transformative travel experiences

3.2.2 - The Dimensions of Wellness

Spirituality is indeed one of the dimensions of wellness, but it is by no means the only one that should be considered when approaching this concept from a comprehensive point of view. In fact, it is only by approaching wellness as a multi-dimensional subject that we can attain a comprehensive standpoint on the topic, hence being important to look at its different dimensions. While there are different models of the dimensions of wellness, with slight differences across different authors, one commonly cited model is the "Seven Dimensions of Wellness" developed by the National Wellness Institute (2020), which includes physical, emotional, intellectual, occupational, environmental, social, and spiritual wellness. We can summarize the definitions of these dimensions according to Table 1 below.

Table 1 - Dimensions of Wellness

Physical Wellness

This dimension relates to maintaining a healthy body through proper nutrition, regular exercise, and adequate sleep. However, one's sense of well-being and physical health are not necessarily correlated with one another. For example, someone who is physically ill may still feel well, while someone who is objectively physically healthy may experience a poor sense of well-being (Anspaugh et al., 2011).

Emotional Wellness

This dimension deals with the capacity to successfully identify and control one's moods and emotions, cultivate resilience, and create positive relationships. Actions, relationships, and autonomy will all be influenced by having a good self-perception and being conscious of one's feelings. A personal development perspective that emphasizes self-actualization and the idea that different facets of whom we are changing as we get older will also be beneficial (Miller & Foster, 2010).

Intellectual Wellness

This feature pertains to the capacity for lifelong learning and personal development through intellectual activities like reading, picking up new skills, and developing critical thought. While some studies link increased education levels to improved subjective well-being, others relate middle-level education to the highest levels of life satisfaction. However, there is evidence that nations with lower incomes benefit more from greater levels of education (Blanchflower & Oswald, 2005).

Occupational Wellness

Finding personal fulfillment and happiness at work, striking a balance between work and personal life, and having a sense of purpose in one's work are all aspects of this dimension. The degree of occupational well-being can be determined by finding a balance between work obligations and other commitments (Helliwell & Putnam, 2004).

Environmental Wellness

This component pertains to being conscious of and acting to safeguard the environment and build a pleasant, sustainable living area. For instance, urban green space may enhance

possibilities for physical exercise and foster emotions of calm and wellness, both of which are beneficial to health (Anspaugh et al., 2011).

Social Wellness

This aspect has to do with preserving good relationships and social ties, giving back to the community, and creating a sense of belonging. The World Health Organization emphasized the significance of social factors when measuring health inequities and stated that being a part of the community in which one lives is essential for the material, emotional, and political empowerment that supports social welfare and equitable health (*World Health Organization, 2008*)

Spiritual Wellness

Probably one of the most developed and discussed topic in the literature, this dimension has to do with finding meaning, purpose, and a connection to something greater than oneself through activities like mindfulness, meditation, and contemplation. It might or might not involve religious practices, but the goal is finding an internal source that might offer one a sense of power and serve as a guide for discovering meaning in life (Helliwell & Putnam, 2004).

3.2.3 - The Loss of Wellness

Why is there now a demand for wellness? Increasing civilisation, technology, computerised automation, and perpetual change in the West have led to existential anguish, identity crises, and feelings of loneliness, sadness, and tension among its people. Western nations are becoming especially less religious and more secular, and people look for consolation in things that improve their emotional, psychological, and spiritual well-being (Steiner & Reisinger, 2006). Communities have become more dispersed as a result of postmodern global capitalism, particularly in metropolitan settings, and the materialism that has developed in Western countries sometimes fails to fully nourish the spirit (Smith & Kelly, 2006a). Sandercock (1998) suggests that the post-modern metropolis, or "Cosmopolis," denies its residents access to sacred and spiritual places, spaces for contemplation and reflection. Furthermore, Soja (2000) depicts the "Post-metropolis" as cities with enlarging bounds that are getting harder and harder to leave. They are typically divided and polarized

and are frequently a source of unease and worry. Such cities' 'hyperreality' and cultural variety may be both fascinating and overwhelming, making escapism to quieter, natural settings a frequent desire, which is frequently accomplished through tourism.

Certainly, we can go further and consider a diversity of social, cultural, and environmental factors that contribute to the loss of wellness. Many individuals nowadays live sedentary lives, spending countless hours in front of screens without moving much. This lack of exercise can result in a variety of health issues, such as diabetes, heart disease, and obesity (Kohl et al., 2012). Furthermore, processed foods, sugar, and harmful fats are frequently abundant in modern diets, which can lead to chronic illnesses and other health issues (Mozaffarian & Ludwig, 2010), and a lot of individuals experience chronic stress, which can cause a variety of physical and mental health problems, including as anxiety, depression, and heart disease (McEwen, 2012). Additionally, many people claim to feel alone and cut off from other people, which can be harmful to both their physical and emotional health (Cacioppo & Patrick, 2009), and these feelings were particularly enhanced during the COVID-19 pandemic when the social distance was mandatory and brought individuals even more apart than they were before. It is also evident that a great number of people struggle to find a balance between work and life in our fast-paced and interconnected environment, which can result in burnout, stress, and other health issues (Grzywacz et al., 2002). Naturally, the aforementioned circumstances heavily compromise the integrity of many of the wellness dimensions presented before, consequently distressing the perspective of wellness as a holistic concept.

On a more philosophical proposition, Heidegger, (1977) cautioned that "technicity," or our belief that the environment was made by us to be controlled and exploited by us, posed a threat to human nature itself. He claimed that by becoming entangled in what he called "the epoch of technicity," individuals ran the risk of becoming what he called "the standing reserves," the dehumanized stock that is available to be exploited as "human resources," "human capital," and consumers. He was particularly concerned about this threat to our human nature, not because he was against change and the advancement of history, but rather because he feared that we would not be able to realize our full potential as distinct and authentic human beings while we were so preoccupied and superficially engaged with the world around us (Heidegger & Schmidt, 2010). Arguably, one can affirm the increasing disconnections towards ourselves and our fast-paced lifestyles led us to a point where seeking

wellness and improving one’s health on a holistic level became a matter of urgent importance. The loss of wellness is turning into a pursuit of wellness and tourism is one of the paths being used in this quest, so it is relevant to analyse the industry in order to understand the current status of things and what trends might surge.

3.3 - Quantifying the Rise of Holistic Tourism: Statistical Insights

As we have seen thus far, the existing literature suggests that holistic tourism is growing at an unprecedented pace. Nonetheless, this theoretical overview will be more thorough with quantitative data that supports the growth that this sector of tourism has shown over the years. As we have previously stated, it is not always easy to find clear numbers that portray the field of holistic tourism since its concept is often blurry and intertwined with wellness tourism. Nonetheless, we consider that the data available regarding wellness tourism can be used to, to a certain extent, interpret the growth of holistic tourism, especially considering our abovementioned graphical depiction where the first is an integral part of the latter. The Global Wellness Institute's latest report on the global wellness economy, which encompasses wellness tourism, includes some key figures and insights on the growth of this field: wellness tourism achieved a high of \$720 billion in the year before the pandemic in 2019, but it suffered a considerable decline in the pandemic year of 2020 to \$436 billion. Regardless, the future appears very promising: according to the GWI, the market will expand at the highest pace of any health market through 2025, from \$817 billion in 2022 to \$1.13 trillion by 2025. This reflects a projected average annual

Table 3 - Wellness Economy Growth Projections by Sector, 2020-2025

	Market Size (US\$ Billions)		Projected Market Size (US\$ Billions)					Projected Average Annual Growth Rate
	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	2020-2025
Wellness Tourism	\$720.4	\$435.7	\$658.2	\$816.5	\$928.2	\$1,030.6	\$1,127.6	20,9%
Traditional and Complementary Medicine	\$431.9	\$412.7	\$448.4	\$480	\$512.6	\$546.5	\$582.6	7,1%
Mental Wellness	\$122.3	\$131.2	\$147.5	\$163.4	\$180.1	\$195.5	\$209.8	9,8%

Source: Adapted from “*The Global Wellness Economy: Looking Beyond COVID*” (Global Wellness Institute, 2021), based upon economic and industry sector projections from the IMF, ILO, Euromonitor, and GWI’s data and projection model.

Data on the main destination markets for wellness tourism shows that North America and Europe are the two main regions when it comes to wellness tourism expenditure and trips. This is arguably unsurprisingly given the fact that these are more developed regions where there is a higher purchase power and facility in engaging in these types of travels. Furthermore, one can arguably affirm that this upholds the previously reviewed literature that suggests that Western societies are the ones who have a greater need to immerse in wellness experiences due to the characteristics of its busy and demanding lifestyle. Additionally, given the purpose of this study, it is important to highlight that Portugal appears as the 18th country with the higher expenditure in wellness tourism and the 3rd highest average annual growth between 2017 and 2019 (13.6%), hinting the potential of the country to be a strong player in the wellness tourism market.

Table 4 - Top 20 Destination Markets in 2020

	Wellness Tourism Expenditures				Average Annual Growth Rate		Number of Trips
	(US\$ billions)			Rank in 2020	2017 - 2019	2019 - 2020	(millions) 2020
	2017	2019	2020				
United States	\$226.0	\$263.5	\$162.1	1	8.0%	-38.5%	114.8
Germany	\$65.7	\$73.5	\$59.0	2	5.7%	-19.7%	57.4
France	\$30.7	\$34.7	\$21.3	3	6.3%	-38.6%	21.8
China	\$26.4	\$34.4	\$19.5	4	14.1%	-43.3%	67.5
Japan	\$23.9	\$26.6	\$19.1	5	5.5%	-28.1%	33.8
Austria	\$16.5	\$18.9	\$11.9	6	6.9%	-37.1%	13.1
Switzerland	\$13.4	\$15.5	\$10.8	7	7.6%	-30.7%	8.4
Italy	\$13.4	\$14.5	\$9.0	8	4.0%	-37.8%	8,6
United Kingdom	\$13.5	\$15.1	\$9.0	9	5.9%	-40.4%	16.4
Australia	\$12.3	\$14.0	\$8.5	10	6.9%	-39.4%	8,6
Canada	\$12.5	\$13.9	\$8.4	11	5.3%	-39.6%	10
India	\$11.4	\$13.3	\$7.2	12	8.0%	-45,6%	48.2
Mexico	\$9.7	\$12.5	\$6.2	13	13.6%	-50.9%	11.9
Spain	\$9.9	\$10.8	\$5.2	14	4.7%	-51.6%	12.7
Thailand	\$12.0	\$16.9	\$4.7	15	18.7%	-72.3%	6.5

South Korea	\$6.8	\$8.3	\$4.3	16	10.8%	-48.4%	16.8
Malaysia	\$5.0	\$6.1	\$3.5	17	10.1%	-42.1%	7.5
Portugal	\$3.4	\$4.4	\$2.8	18	13.6%	-36.0%	4
Denmark	\$3.2	\$3.8	\$2.8	19	9.3%	-26.2%	6.6
Turkey	\$4.5	\$5.7	\$2.7	20	12.4%	-52.5%	6.7

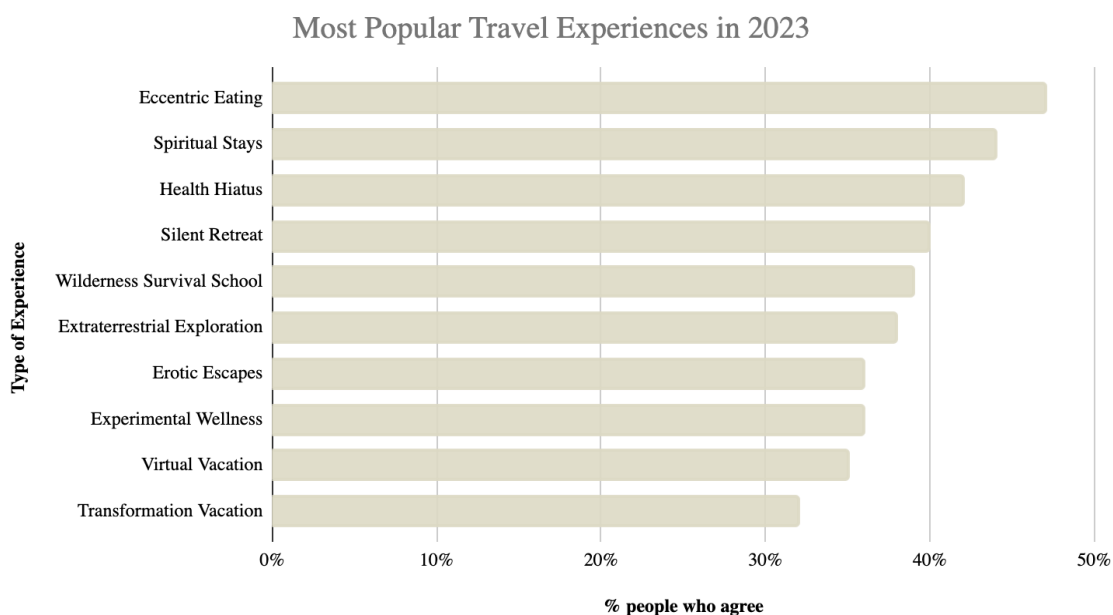
Source: Retrieved from “*The Global Wellness Economy: Looking Beyond COVID*” (Global Wellness Institute, 2021) based on tourism data from Euromonitor.

3.4 - Future Trends

Taking a glimpse at the future trends of tourism and noticing how they relate to the areas of holistic tourism and wellness tourism is crucial to finish the theoretical analysis of this study as it broadens our understanding of these markets while suggesting the possible directions that they will undertake. Additionally, assessing the future trends of the market can also contribute valuable inputs to the next chapters of this paper, which will analyse the feasibility of a new business project in the area of holistic tourism in Portugal.

According to Booking.com, in 2023 many tourists will want to "treat their minds, bodies, and souls" while travelling. In its yearly publication about travel predictions, the company states that 42% of tourists want to take a trip that is focused on their physical and emotional well-being, including retreats to ease the effects of menstruation and pregnancy, while nearly half (44%) desire to attend retreats focused on meditation or awareness (*Travel Predictions 2023*, 2023). Additionally, 36% said they would like to experiment with hallucinogenic experiences while using marijuana or other psychoactive substances like mushrooms or ayahuasca. This might suggest that in 2023, more tourists may journey to nations that allow the use of specific psychoactive substances, like The Netherlands or Brazil. Spiritual stays, health hiatus, silent retreats, experimental wellness, and transformation vacations are experiences that rank amongst the ten most popular types of niche experience for tourists in 2023, suggesting that holistic tourism experiences have the potential to witness further growth in the near future.

Figure 2 - Most Popular Travel Experiences in 2023



Source: Retrieved from *Travel Predictions 2023* (Booking.com, 2023)

The Global Wellness Institute indicates that all traveller generations, including Millennials, Gen Z, and Baby Boomers, are widely embracing regenerative travel, doing good, and affecting positive change through wellness tourism, suggesting that conscious travel that truly affects the location and how it is supported is becoming more and more popular. Additionally, they contend that COVID's continuing effects on our health, employment, and family relationships have caused a collective trauma for the world, highlighting the expansion of "soft" intervention programs like meditation, breathwork, and holistic practices as well as the drive to raise awareness of mental health issues and their nuances. Other future trends suggested by the GWI are micro-dosing with plant medicine, which supports Booking.com's aforementioned study, and a Digital Nomad boom, indicating that the contemporary digital nomad wishes to prioritize their holistic well-being while they work and travel (*Wellness Tourism Initiative Trends*, 2022). Other trends reasoned for holistic tourism and markets encompass the continuous growth of retreat tourism, sustainability-focused wellness experiences, and holistic travel tours such as yoga training or personal growth seminars (BeBlissfulTravel, 2021).

Holistic tourism seems to be a flourishing field of the wide-ranging tourism industry, and the growing need for the benefits that it carries is a factor that contributes to the continuity of its expansion. Moreover, the future trends envisioned for the holistic tourism industry are suggestive of its growth potential and are aligned with the literature review performed in this chapter. But despite the importance of theoretical support when assessing the viability of a new business opportunity, it is not enough to rely solely on the existing literature when considering the potential of a new enterprise in the area of tourism. More personalized and detailed evidence is needed to sustain the relevance of a potential business and a closer look at the industry is necessary to see beyond the theoretical framework. In this context, the next chapter will focus on the analysis of personal interviews conducted with stakeholders of the holistic tourism industry, ultimately aiming to deepen our understanding of this tourism field and provide valuable inputs that shall be important to consider when designing a viability study for a similar business project in Portugal.

Section II: Feasibility of a Holistic Tourism Venue in the Region of Mafra, Portugal

Chapter 4: Holistic & Wellness Tourism Characterization of Portugal with a Focus on the Region of Mafra

Lisbon, the capital city of Portugal, has long been renowned for its rich cultural, historical, and recreational characteristics. Yet, beyond its traditional attractions lies the dynamic and evolving sector of holistic tourism. This chapter aims to provide an overview of the holistic and wellness tourism scene in Portugal, focusing on the area of Mafra, a town that, although smaller in scale, showcases great potential in capturing the hearts and minds of holistic travellers. By examining the offerings, trends, and unique aspects of this transformative travel sector, we aim to shed light on the region's role as a holistic and wellness destination and introduce a new heuristic tourism project that, in our view, can greatly benefit the sector and the region of Mafra.

4.1 - Holistic Tourism in Portugal

The sector of Holistic Tourism is not per se new to the country. The first signs of holistic tourism in Portugal came with the emergence of thermal spas (Pereira, 2016), whose audience consisted primarily of the bourgeoisie, who were in search of a location with water access featuring therapeutic qualities conducive to rest and rejuvenation (Cunha, 2010). This type of tourism was gradually replaced by more recreational holidays in the coastal zones of the country (Gustavo & Completo, 2014) and it was only in 2007, according to the National Strategic Tourism Plan (PENT), that Portugal was considered a suitable destination for the development of activities related to health and well-being (Ministério da Economia e da Inovação, 2007). According to the Tourism 2020 Action Plan, health tourism may face demographic and socio-cultural changes by 2020, owing to an ageing population and outdated health care, which may lead to a greater demand for health services in other countries at significantly lower prices (Turismo de Portugal, 2015). However, *Estratégia 2027* asserts that in order to avoid this outdatedness and loss of visitors, it is vital to pay attention to international trends that emphasize the necessity of fostering a healthy lifestyle in tourism activities, goods, and services. The provision of health and wellness treatments at specialized facilities that encourage healthy living, health and wellness, mindfulness, sports, and nature activities is one of the active elements of this approach (Turismo de Portugal, 2017).

Despite the few studies around the field of Holistic and Wellness Tourism in Portugal, there are some that provide interesting results. A study on the potential for retreats in the Jardim das Borboletas, Aveiro, concluded that Portugal is a country that meets the characteristics for the development of the Holistic Tourism sector, particularly spiritual tourism (Lopes, 2014); another study, on the desires and behaviour of visitors of different regions of the country (Gerês, Lisbon, the Algarve and the Azores), concluded that the majority of respondents show a desire to get away from the routine of work and that Portugal has regions suitable for this in the form of Holistic Tourism (G. L. da Rocha, 2015). Given the results of the aforementioned studies, considering that Portugal is a location with unique and advantageous qualities for the development of wellness centres with a variety of focuses, including spiritual, health, and fitness (G. Rocha et al., 2016; Vilela, 2012) and that there is a simultaneous increase in both demand and supply associated with the growing interest in wellness, one can arguably affirm that this industry represents an excellent enhancer of the country as a tourist destination, which consequently adds relevance to the present study.

4.2 - Mafra: An Upcoming Hub of Holistic Tourism Offers

As we continue examining the Holistic and Wellness Tourism in Portugal, our gaze now turns to Mafra, an unassuming yet captivating destination on the outskirts of Lisbon. In this section, we delve into the unique attributes that render Mafra a growing haven for holistic and wellness travellers.

Mafra, a town rich in historical value, is frequently praised for its recognizable palace convent, the Palácio Nacional de Mafra, a work of architecture that bears witness to Portugal's illustrious past. However, beyond its historical appeal, Mafra has still been subtly carving out a place for itself in the developing landscape of holistic and health tourism. Intriguingly, Mafra's emergence as a holistic and wellness destination can be viewed as a microcosm of the broader shifts occurring within the realm of travel. It expresses the desire of the modern traveller for experiences that go beyond the realm of traditional leisure, including a sincere search for well-being, growth as a person, and a deep connection to the environment, which is often sought in places with natural landscapes and small towns where the busyness of the everyday life can slow down. Arguably, this is why Mafra, a municipality composed of smaller towns that range from coastal villages to country-side settlements where the way of living is yet unaffected by the rush of bigger cities, has been developing rapidly within the last decade. This was reassured by the last national census held in 2021, which revealed that Mafra was the second municipality with the highest growth of residents in the last decade, showing an increase of 12.8% (JM, 2021). Figure 3 shows Mafra placement on the map and highlights its proximity to Lisbon: only 41km separate Mafra from the capital Lisbon, which is one of the features that also make these region so attractive.

Figure 3: Map of Mafra



Note: Image adapted from ‘Distrito de Lisboa’ (n.d.)

Naturally, the offer of holistic experiences in the area of Mafra is also thriving. Table 5 shows a sample of holistic tourism offers in the area of Mafra.

Table 5 - Sample Assortment of Holistic Tourism Offers in Mafra

Name	Location	Description
Salty Pelican	Ericeira	“Brace yourself for an extraordinary experience that encompasses everything we hold dear: the thrill of surfing, the serenity of yoga, the warmth of the sun, the vastness of the sea, exhilarating adventures and delightful companionship. Enliven your spirit with revitalizing Hatha yoga sequences and indulge in profound relaxation with restorative Yin yoga” (<i>Salty Pelican Ericeira</i> , n.d.)
Sandhi House	Ericeira	“Sandhi House is a unique guesthouse situated in the heart of beautiful Ericeira, a charming fishing village with its tradition linked to the sea, now recognised as one of the World’s Surfing Reserves and popular Yoga retreat locations. We imagined a place that would have everything you needed for a magical escape. A place to re-charge mind, body and soul. A place with the relaxed and cozy atmosphere of

		a home blended with comfort and elegance and a feeling of luxury.”(<i>Sandhi House</i> , n.d.)
Zee Barn	Encarnação	“This co-creation includes permaculture and regenerative design, yoga & and meditation while connecting with other Earth-friendly beings. We journey with sound and breath during retreats & immersions designed to restore your body & soul. Our exquisite & scrumptious homegrown and finely prepared food is a trip of its own... come and enjoy.” (<i>Zee Barn Permaculture Portugal</i> , n.d.)
Shanti Space	Mafra	“The venue, an old Quinta set in a national park and is endowed with beautiful fruit trees, giant oak corks, grape vines, vistas and a stream at the end of the garden where we often encounter our neighbours; deer and wild boar. Inspired by self-reliance; we wish to live more sustainably, eating from garden to plate and using natural energy resources. Here is a place to feel balanced in a nourishing environment supportive of freedom and growth.” (<i>The Shanti Space - Portugal Retreats</i> , n.d.)
Terra Lodge	Santo Isidoro	“Terra Lodge gives the opportunity to its guests to retreat from everyday life and merge with nature. Here you will find an excellent environment and conditions for spiritual practices. This place is suitable for various practices and activities, including yoga, tai-chi, meditation or to have a wonderful massage. Come and find your inner peace, balance, harmony and feel closer to your essence.” (<i>Terralodge</i> , n.d.)
Casa Paço d’Ilhas	Ericeira	“Casa Paço D’Ilhas provides the perfect setting for your intimate, unique and atmospheric retreat. Yoga, ceramics, Wim Hof Method, mindfulness, surf coaching, ayurvedic,... whatever your passion is that you would like to share with the world, we make sure you will only have to focus on what you do best and we’ll take care of the rest.” (<i>Paço D’Ilhas - The Soul of Ericeira</i> , n.d.)
House of the Rising Monjo	Santo Isidoro	The House of the Rising Mojo remains untouched by urban development, it stands under an ancient Pine Tree. Surrounded by fields, forests and the Cuco River. The yoga platform is under a big tent for an outdoor practice in the middle of nature, to flow with the wind on your skin and the songs of the birds. (‘House of the Rising Mojo’, n.d.)
Alma Yoga Shalla	São João das Lampas	“Almashala is located in a strategic location. The Sintra reserve is a few steps away and is one of the most suggestive natural attractions of all of Portugal, and it offers infinite walking and trekking routes. From our place, you can arrive at the beach by walking, passing through an enchanting path in the valley or following the river and getting lost in the elements. Ericeira was declared World Surfing Reserve in 2011 and is special for a world-class 8 km long surf coastline.” (<i>ALMASHALA YOGA</i> , n.d.)

Note: *Own elaboration*

The aforementioned venues offer a mix of stays, yoga retreats, and surf classes, and many are also available for rent to facilitators who are in need of a space to host their own holistic experiences. This assortment displays the diversity of the current offer of holistic tourism experiences available in Mafra and reassures the potential of the region for a holistic and wellness destination.

The flourishing landscape of holistic tourism in Mafra is not solely a result of geographical charm. It is also the product of visionary individuals who recognized the area's latent potential. These entrepreneurs, driven by a passion for holistic well-being and a profound connection to Mafra's unspoiled landscapes, have played a pivotal role in shaping the region's holistic tourism scene, making these founders and proprietors of the establishments mentioned in Table 5 exemplars of this pioneering spirit. A curious aspect that we find important to underline is the fact that the great majority of these business owners are foreigners - from all the abovementioned venues, only Terra Lodge is owned by Portuguese. This reveals another pressing trend in the region of Mafra, which is the growth of the foreign resident population, with 7.2% of the population registered in 2021 being foreigners (*PORDATA - Ambiente de Consulta*, n.d.), representing an increase of over two percentage points when compared with 2011. Despite the benefits brought by these enterprises to the growth of the business fabric of the region, it is important to acknowledge the risks of gentrification and polarization between local and foreign populations that might arise. Thus, it is crucial to ensure that the growing number of holistic services in the region are equally distributed and available also for the Portuguese population.

Another recurrent theme in Mafra's holistic offerings is the emphasis on sustainability and harmony with nature. The region's natural reserves, like the World Surf Reserve of Ericeira, and the Atlantic coastline offer a serene backdrop for holistic experiences that promote a profound connection with the environment. Many of the holistic venues in Mafra are committed to sustainable practices, emphasizing eco-friendly accommodations, permaculture gardens, and locally sourced, organic cuisine. The use of renewable energy sources and waste reduction initiatives also align with the broader global trend towards responsible tourism.

4.3 - Exploring the Feasibility of a Holistic Venue in Mafra

The preceding sections have unveiled Portugal's potential for being a cluster for holistic tourism venues, as well as Mafra's journey from a historical gem to an emerging hub of holistic tourism. The presence of a diverse array of holistic offerings, the commitment to sustainability, the fusion of culture and well-being, and the region's natural allure show a promising picture for Mafra's future as a holistic destination. But amid this transformative landscape lies a compelling opportunity - the feasibility of establishing a venue that not only appeals to tourists seeking holistic experiences but also opens its doors to the local community. While Mafra's allure as a holistic destination continues to attract visitors, there is a distinct space for a venue that does not solely cater to tourists. As the local population grows, there is also a rising interest among residents in holistic well-being, sustainability, and mindfulness practices. A venue offering holistic experiences to both tourists and locals can bridge this gap, creating a vibrant space for community engagement. It can serve as a hub for wellness enthusiasts, a platform for cultural exchange, and a catalyst for sustainable living practices within the local community. The establishment of such a holistic venue can also contribute significantly to the local economy: by providing job opportunities, supporting local suppliers, and driving interest to nearby businesses, it can become an integral part of Mafra's economic fabric.

Additionally, the venue's dual function as a holistic destination for travellers and a community centre can ensure year-round business sustainability, mitigating the seasonality often associated with tourism-dependent regions.

The thriving holistic tourism sector in Mafra can serve as a living laboratory for entrepreneurs and stakeholders interested in this field. It provides valuable insights into traveller preferences, sustainability practices, and the integration of traditional settings with contemporary well-being. By leveraging these insights, a holistic venue in Mafra has the potential to not only meet the evolving demands of travellers and residents but also contribute to the growth and diversification of Mafra's tourism landscape.

4.4 - Casa Doze: Holistic Venue Concept and Purpose

Casa Doze - meaning “twelfth house”, a reference to the astrological concept of house division that suggests the twelfth house as being associated with spirituality and positive transformations - will focus on attracting visitors that will engage with its offers of retreats, workshops, and short-term stays, while also providing the local community with activities that can be attended on a regular basis with the ultimate aim of contributing to one’s wellness in all its dimensions.

The purpose of Casa Doze will be to provide authentic, genuine, and evidence-based experiences and education that will bring together useful tools for its guests and visitors to enhance their wellness on a holistic level, not only acting as a catalyst for wellness on a short-term but also looking into fostering positive habits in the community. For tourists, Casa Doze will act as a catalyst for short-term well-being transformation. Week-long retreats and stays offer an escape from the hustle and busyness of daily life, allowing individuals to immerse themselves in holistic practices, from yoga to astrology and acupuncture. Through these offerings, Casa Doze aims to equip guests with valuable tools that can be integrated into their lives long after their stay, fostering lasting positive habits. However, Casa Doze will not solely be a destination for tourists. It is our belief that well-being should be accessible to all, and our commitment extends to the local community. This means that regular holistic experiences and educational practices that can be attended on an ongoing basis will also be offered. Yoga classes, astrology workshops, acupuncture sessions, and recurrent workshops on holistic wellness themes are examples of the resources Casa Doze will provide to both tourists and the community. Moreover, sustainable practices will also be at the core of the venue’s operations: from food and waste management to energy sourcing and the involvement of the local community, Casa Doze aims to be a best practice when it comes to sustainability. Finally, Casa Doze also seeks to bridge the gap between the perceived untruthfulness of holistic wellness and its practical, real-world applications. As we understand that holistic wellness and spirituality can often seem mystical or unattainable, our commitment is to provide tangible, effective practices that empower individuals to live healthier, more balanced lives while having access to trustful knowledge about alternative practices.

With the purpose of better understanding the business fabric of holistic tourism offers, a set of interviews was conducted with key- stakeholders of the sector. The next chapters will reveal the methodology used to conduct such a study, as well as present the results and findings of the interviews conducted.

Chapter 5: Methodology

This chapter provides an overview of the methodology employed in conducting interviews with different stakeholders of the holistic tourism and retreat tourism industry, ultimately aiming at getting insights that can be valuable when considering a viability study for a holistic tourism space in Portugal for the purpose of this Master's final project. We will elaborate on the main objectives of the interviews, the criteria utilized for the selection and recruitment of interview participants, the methodologies applied during the interviews, including the transcription process, and finally, the analytical techniques employed to scrutinize the data obtained from these interviews.

5.1 - The Relevance of a Qualitative Approach

For this section of the study, a total of seven semi-structured interviews were conducted with individuals representing key stakeholder groups within the holistic tourism area: retreat guests, retreat space managers, and retreat facilitators. The interviews aimed to gain a deeper understanding of the perspectives and motivations of these stakeholders, shedding light on their perceptions of the market and the underlying factors that drive their engagement in retreat and holistic experiences.

The choice of semi-structured interviews as the primary research method was driven by the desire to obtain rich and nuanced insights from participants. The interviews served as a research instrument to facilitate the extraction of more comprehensive insights that could not be fully encompassed if we relied exclusively on more general quantitative data sources, like questionnaires concerning stakeholders' previous experiences with holistic tourism. This approach is similar to the one taken by (Bone, 2013) when studying spiritual retreat tourism in New Zealand, as it proved to be highly effective in informing the results and fulfilling the aims of the research. Semi-structured interviews allow for flexibility in questioning while

ensuring consistency and reliability in data collection (Gill et al., 2008), and by engaging in dialogues with the participants, their unique perspectives, experiences, and motivations were explored, enabling a comprehensive exploration of the subject matter. Moreover, the choice of semi-structured interviews in this context seemed adequate since some interviewees shared intimate and personal matters that would have not been easily captured in a quantitative approach.

Participants were purposefully selected to ensure diversity and representativeness within the holistic tourism industry. Retreat guests were chosen based on their prior participation in retreat experiences, while retreat space managers and retreat facilitators were selected for their expertise and involvement in managing and organizing retreat enterprises. The inclusion of retreat facilitators surged naturally along the interview process, as we realised that not only those who own physical spaces and touristic facilities are important stakeholders on the field since there are many key players on the market who do not own or manage a physical touristic space but rather organise retreats and holistic tourism experiences in different locations. Including these various stakeholders aimed to capture multiple viewpoints and gain a holistic understanding of the feasibility of offering similar experiences in Mafra.

In addition to conducting interviews with stakeholders from Portugal, interviews were also conducted with stakeholders from the South Coast of Sri Lanka. The decision to include this region in the study was motivated mainly by two factors: the fact that the author of this project was in Sri Lanka for a long period of time while working on this paper, and the fact that Sri Lanka is becoming an emergent and significant market for holistic tourism and retreat spaces. This brings up the concept of convenience sampling, a method where researchers select participants based on their availability and accessibility (Kempf-Leonard, 2004), which, despite its limitations, proved to be valuable since it allowed for quick data collection and an easiness of access without compromising the relevance of the stakeholders interviewed. Furthermore, recognizing the valuable insights that could be gained from this growing market, the inclusion of Sri Lankan stakeholders aimed to seek for a broader range of insights and inputs while broadening the scope of the study. By examining the perceptions and motivations of retreat guests, retreat space managers, and retreat facilitators in both locations, this research sought to identify similarities, differences, and unique factors that contribute to the viability of holistic tourism. Including the South Coast of Sri Lanka enriches

the study by offering a global perspective and facilitating a comprehensive understanding of the holistic tourism industry.

The sample size for this study was composed of seven interviews, two of which were conducted virtually via video call and five were conducted in-person. Each interview lasted between twenty minutes and forty-five minutes and questions were slightly adjusted depending on the profile of the respondent. Although there is a discussion about the validity of different sample sizes in qualitative research, for this project we followed Creswell’s et al. (2007) suggestion that semi-structured/in-depth interviews require a minimum sample size of between five and twenty-five, thus giving us confidence that the results obtained from the interviews will be valid and insightful. Moreover, in their study about sample sizing, Hagaman & Wutich (2017) suggested that one needs between four and six interviews to correctly identify the three most common themes, giving us extra confidence in the validity of the results obtained. The following table summarizes the basic profile of each interviewee:

Table 6 - Interviewee profile

Interviewee	Age	Nationality	Project Involved	Location
Guest A	25	Portuguese	Vipassana Meditation	Spain
Guest B	24	Austrian	Talala Retreat	Sri Lanka
Guest C	56	Portuguese	Centro de Salud Vital Zuhaizpe	Spain
Guest D	28	German	Wurzelwerkstatt	Portugal
Facilitator A	33	German	Holistic Business Retreat	Germany
Facilitator B	31	Austrian	Wurzelwerkstatt	Portugal/Austria
Manager A	34	English	Soul and Surf	Sri Lanka

5.2 - Design of the interview script

The semi-structured format of the interviews allowed for a combination of predetermined questions and the flexibility to explore emerging themes and follow up on participants' responses. For the interviews with tourists, the goals were to understand the motivations that drive individuals to engage in holistic tourism experiences and retreats, gain insights into their experiences during these experiences, identify the activities they prioritize

the most, and uncover the perceived benefits and impacts on their daily lives. Additionally, the importance of sustainability in their choices and their loyalty to this type of tourism experience were investigated.

Table 7 - Summarization of interview script for guests

Goals	Questions
a. understand the motivations that bring people to engage in holistic tourism experiences/retreats;	1. What would you say if someone asked you to give your reasons for going on a holistic experience/retreat? 2. Why did you choose this specific type of holistic experience?
b. understand how they experience a holistic tourism experience/retreat;	3. What does the experience of being on a holistic tourism experience/retreat mean to you? 4. Do you think that holistic experiences/retreat spaces are healing or therapeutic in any way? How?
c. understand what kind of activities they look for the most;	5. What kind of activities do you value the most when attending a holistic experience? 6. Are the activities you mentioned already part of your daily routine?
d. understand their perceived benefits and impacts in their daily lives;	7. What are the main benefits you received from this experience? 8. What difference do you think having this experience will make in your life and in your holistic well-being?
e. understand the importance of sustainability when they choose a resort or retreat space;	9. Is it important for you that the tourism facilities where you engage in retreats and holistic experiences adopt sustainable practices? For example, respecting and integrating the culture of local communities, serving meals with locally sourced ingredients, and having green energy sources.
f. understand if the visitor/customer is loyal to this type of tourism experience and is willing to repeat it in his/her next holiday	10. Will you continue to look for wellness vacations and holistic experiences? Will you stick to the resorts and destinations you already know, or would you consider venturing to new destinations (namely Portugal)?

On the other hand, the interviews with owners of retreat spaces and facilitators focused on understanding the main challenges encountered when opening and managing wellness and retreat spaces, as well as organizing holistic tourism experiences. The goals included examining factors related to marketing, communication, and defining target audiences, exploring the significance of sustainability and sustainable practices within their businesses, and gaining insights into their perspectives on the present state of the industry and future trends. As mentioned before, the interview script for facilitators surged has a need to distinguish between those who own and manage a physical space and those who do not, meaning that the questions to the facilitators were an adaptation of the script directed at the managers.

Table 8 - Summarization of interview script for managers and facilitators

Goals	Questions
g. understand the main challenges of opening a wellness and retreat space;	1. What are the main challenges and struggles when opening a wellness and retreat space? For example, licencing, competition, socio-economic factors, etc.
h. understanding the main challenges of managing and running a wellness and retreat space;	2. What are the main challenges and struggles when managing a wellness and retreat space?
i. understand the main factors to take into account regarding marketing, communication, and defining a target audience;	3. What are the main issues to consider when it comes to marketing, communication, and defining your target audience?
j. understand the importance of sustainability and sustainable practices when running this type of business;	4. Is sustainability an important aspect of the business? What are the greatest challenges and benefits that arise from implementing sustainable business practices?
k. understand their perspectives on the present state of the industry and on future trends;	5. What is your perception regarding the present state of wellness/retreat tourism and what are your perspectives on future trends?

Data analysis followed a thematic approach, involving the identification and categorization of key themes and patterns that emerged from the interview transcripts. For this, the author listened to the recordings of the interviews and transcribed the interview to then proceed with its analysis. This qualitative analysis aimed to uncover recurring patterns, unique perspectives, and commonalities among participants, contributing to a comprehensive understanding of the research topic.

The findings from the interviews will be presented and analyzed in the subsequent chapter, informing the viability study of holistic tourism in Portugal. By considering the perspectives of retreat guests, retreat space managers, and retreat facilitators, this research aims to provide valuable insights for policymakers, industry practitioners, and other stakeholders interested in the development and sustainability of holistic tourism in the Portuguese context.

Chapter 6: Findings

In this chapter, we present the key insights drawn from the series of in-depth interviews conducted within the holistic tourism and retreat industry. The following common themes encapsulate the core conclusions from these interviews:

- Participants are driven by a desire for personal growth, relaxation, and pause from the demands of daily life. Central to their journey is the pursuit of self-discovery and well-being, with activities such as yoga and meditation playing pivotal roles.
- Holistic tourism and retreats are universally regarded as therapeutic and transformative. Disconnecting from the digital world was seen as essential among all the interviewees
- The choice of location significantly influences decisions, with an emphasis on sunny destinations, local interactions, and sustainability. Notably, Portugal, Spain, Italy, and Greece stand out as preferred European choices.
- Retreat space owners and facilitators face multifaceted challenges, including advanced planning, financial risks, and the ongoing quest to maintain authenticity. Additionally, unique legal and political landscapes can present formidable obstacles in certain regions.
- For facilitators, the right location, fostering collaboration, and determining pricing structures are top priorities. Sustainability is highly valued, but its integration must align with affordability.

By analyzing and presenting the data collected through these interviews, this chapter not only contributes to our assessment of the viability of starting a business project in the area of holistic tourism in Portugal, but also provides a comprehensive understanding of the holistic tourism industry, offering valuable insights for policymakers, industry practitioners, and other stakeholders interested in the development and sustainability of holistic tourism experiences. The following sections will delve into the specific findings, organized thematically, to highlight key aspects such as tourists' motivations and experiences, challenges faced by retreat space owners and facilitators, factors influencing tourists' choices, and industry perspectives. These findings contribute to a deeper understanding of the holistic tourism landscape, shedding light on similarities, differences, and emerging trends between

Portugal and the South Coast of Sri Lanka, as well as within the stakeholder groups themselves.

6.1 Motivations and Experiences of Tourists

The motivations that drive individuals to engage in holistic tourism experiences and retreats are diverse, yet they all share a common desire for personal growth, relaxation, and a break from the business of daily life. Participants remarked on the "need to pause and take a break," especially from the ongoing connectedness of social media and technology while looking for a chance to connect with nature and learn about themselves in an atmosphere of like-minded individuals. With yoga and meditation being frequent themes among the majority of the respondents (only Guest C did not mention these activities, although there were group dynamics and physical activities that can be said to be similar to yoga and meditation), they underlined the necessity of learning something new and gaining new abilities or enhancing existing ones during their retreats. This can be depicted with comments made by Guest A and Guest B.

Guest A: *“A Vipassana Meditation course cannot really be seen as a retreat ... It is really a course where you learn a meditation technique - Vipassana - and learn how to practice it, why to practice it, and the theoretical fundamentals of the type of meditation you are doing. Just like there are different types of sports, there are also different types of meditations, so the better you learn and focus on one technique, the more likely you are to grasp its benefits.”*

Guest B: *“If I spend a lot of money I always feel like I want to learn something, so when I do these activities it is always whether a training, or a course, or something like that. This is why I went for the surf and yoga bundle, so I can practice my already existing technique on yoga while learning something new, which is surf.”*

One of the most important incentives, particularly for those who recognized some issues with their mental health and emotional well-being, was the chance to spend time completely on oneself while working on their own well-being. Guest C, in particular, spoke on the importance of having a week to herself, especially in light of the fact that she was responsible for taking care of a sick relative at home.

Although the intensity varied depending on the individual, the experiences of guests during holistic tourism experiences and retreats were regarded as transforming and therapeutic. Participants agreed that even a quick retreat of three to four days might start a slow process of healing by planting a seed that one can take into his daily life. It was assumed that in order to develop their connection with themselves and their ideas it was crucial to be offline and detached from the outer world of social media and constant connectivity. This was described by Guest D in the following way:

“My retreat was four days, which is a short time to really heal or cure anything - whether it is an emotional problem or even a physical one. But I do think that four days are enough to start a healing process and to provide you with the right tools to deal with the problems that will arise in the future. Being offline also plays a very important part in this, because it is such a rare thing to be disconnected from all the rest for a long time. This really allowed me to connect with myself in a better way and to deal directly with my own problems.”

Guest A and D found it difficult to sit in the stillness and explore their inner selves at first, but they gradually adapted and reported an experience of personal growth. On another note, a friendly and familial atmosphere was created by the group dynamics and embodied emotional experiences that occurred in the experience of Guest C, which appeared to enhance trust and togetherness. The opportunity to slow down, be present, and focus on self-care were seen as key factors contributing to an enhanced sense of well-being and they were reported by all four respondents.

When it comes to holistic travel experiences and retreats, yoga and meditation have proven to be the most popular pursuits, as previously noted. These techniques gave people a way to get to know themselves better, grow as individuals, and bring mindfulness to their daily lives. As a way to enhance the whole experience, several participants additionally underlined the value of warm climates and sunny locations. For example, Guest C mentioned:

“I have lived my whole life on the coast of Portugal, so I am used to a mildly warm climate and a lot of sun all year long. So, when I go on a retreat, I look for a location that can provide me the same, because I know that the sun lifts my mood in a certain way. Spain

has a similar climate to Portugal in general, or maybe it is even warmer there, and that is important for me.”

The opportunity to interact with local people and genuinely experience the culture of the area was appreciated since it made for an enriching and authentic experience. The majority of participants valued locally sourced food and the conscious involvement of local communities, so sustainability played some of a role in decision-making. However, Guest B made the curious observation that she always assumes that any holistic retreat embraces sustainable practices. Participants acknowledged the benefit that adopting these activities into their everyday lives will have on their general well-being, which led them to view the quest of learning and obtaining new abilities as an essential feature.

Different participants showed different levels of loyalty and willingness to explore new locations. While some said they preferred to go to diverse places for their holistic tourism experiences (Guest B and Guest D) others said they were eager to go back to their favourite retreat centres (Guest A and Guest C). Annual retreat attendees stressed the significance of implementing these experiences into their lives to improve balance and mental health. Due to its closeness and the fact that one of the questions was expressly designed to determine participants' propensity for this place, Portugal was notably highlighted as a desirable site, especially for shorter getaways. Portugal, Spain, Italy, and Greece were popular choices for future retreat locations because of how easy they were to go there, but one should take into account that all four respondents were European, which may have influenced their answers. Guest B mentioned that *“Portugal will definitely be on my list of places to go on retreats because I have heard many positive things from friends who were already there”*, and Guest D mentioned that *“Portugal is always on the top of my list because of the weather, the food, and especially the people I meet there. I definitely want to visit more locations - like Spain and Greece - but Portugal is always a place where I will go back to”*.

Overall, the motivations, experiences, and perceived benefits of tourists engaging in holistic tourism experiences and retreats revolve mainly around personal growth, relaxation, and the pursuit of well-being, and the importance of being offline and disconnected from social media was also one of the key takeaways from the interviews conducted with the participants of holistic experiences.

6.2 - Challenges and Priorities for Retreat Space Owners and Facilitators

The findings from interviews with retreat space owners and facilitators provided valuable insights into the challenges they encounter when establishing and managing wellness and retreat spaces. One significant challenge that emerged on the side of the facilitators was the need to plan far ahead due to the high demand for retreat facilities, which was a topic raised by both Facilitator A and Facilitator B. Many retreat centres and locations are booked well in advance, sometimes up to a year or more, which poses a risk of uncertainty and unpredictability, especially in times of economic instability or unforeseen events, such as the global COVID-19 pandemic and the economic crisis that followed. Facilitators expressed the difficulty of committing to events without a guarantee of sufficient attendee numbers, which can impact financial planning and resource allocation. Facilitator B expressed this in the following way:

“My main challenge when organising a retreat is definitely that I have to plan it very far ahead, mainly because of the locations. I basically have to plan my offers one or one and a half years in advance, which brings me into the risk that I really do not know what will happen in this time”

Another major challenge identified is the financial risk associated with organising retreats and holistic experiences. To secure locations and amenities, facilitators often need to make significant upfront investments, such as paying deposits or covering operational costs. However, the actual number of participants may not always meet expectations, which can lead to financial strain or losses. Balancing the financial aspect while maintaining the quality and transformative nature of the retreat experiences was pointed to be a delicate task that needs much consideration.

In addition to financial considerations, the issue of scaling the business was another prominent challenge. Many business owners prioritize offering personalized and intimate experiences to maintain attention to detail and individualized care. However, as the demand for their retreats grows, they are confronted with the dilemma of whether to maintain the intimate setting or expand their offerings to accommodate more participants and generate higher revenues. Facilitator B was particularly concerned about expanding her retreat

business without compromising the core values and authenticity of the experiences, which she mentioned to be a complex and critical decision:

“One of our personal challenges as a business is to stay authentic and not go too much into a communication style that is very trendy but rather stick with our principles and vision. We always have to remind ourselves why we are doing this before we can think about an expansion strategy so we can plan accordingly with our values”

Furthermore, in certain regions, the legal and political landscape presents unique challenges for opening and managing a retreat space. In Sri Lanka, one of the countries where interviews were conducted, the political and socioeconomic situation can be delicate, which impacts the process of establishing a business. However, despite such challenges, the business owners in Sri Lanka expressed solidarity and support for one another within the holistic tourism industry. Manager A reported fostering a collaborative atmosphere among businesses, recognizing the shared difficulties and the importance of maintaining a positive and supportive environment for all stakeholders:

“Here at Soul and Surf in Sri Lanka, the biggest issue is definitely the legal side of opening a business. The political and socioeconomic situation of the country is very delicate so that definitely represents a challenge when opening a business here; in terms of competition I can say that every business supports each other around here. We know how hard it can be to manage businesses here so we keep a supportive and good atmosphere among all business owners. There are also many nationalities so it is a very good cultural exchange.”

Moreover, different types of retreat spaces were acknowledged during the interviews. Some owners highlighted the existence of "fast-food" style retreats, which are characterized by maximizing the number of guests with minimal effort to provide a quality experience, focusing solely on getting as many guests as possible while allocating minimal resources. On the other end of the spectrum, more premium retreats were emphasized, where a strong focus is placed on customer experience, especially concerning yoga, surfing, meditation, and wellness experiences. The varying approaches to retreats underscore the diversity of offerings within the holistic tourism industry and highlight that all the interviewees have shown some concerns with the amount of supply that currently exists in the sector.

When it comes to the main priorities considered when organizing holistic tourism experiences, the retreat space owners and facilitators emphasized several key priorities that significantly influence the success and appeal of their offerings. The location of the retreat space emerged as a fundamental consideration, encompassing multiple aspects such as accessibility, proximity to airports, availability of necessary infrastructure, and ample space to accommodate various activities, such as yoga sessions and various wellness workshops. It was consensual among all the interviewees that a well-chosen location plays a vital role in attracting participants and contributes to the overall retreat experience. Additionally, the willingness of space owners to collaborate and demonstrate flexibility in accommodating the specific needs and preferences of facilitators was highlighted as crucial. A harmonious partnership between retreat space owners and facilitators is essential for a seamless and successful event, which ultimately benefits the customer experience. Flexibility in working together to adapt to changing circumstances or individualized retreat requirements was mentioned as an important topic to foster a positive and fruitful collaboration that can contribute to a long-term partnership.

Furthermore, pricing was mentioned as a significant priority when organizing retreats, especially for facilitators who do not own a fixed retreat location. Determining the optimal pricing structure to strike a balance between affordability for participants and profitability for facilitators was pointed out to be a challenging task. Offering an attractive price point while delivering high-quality experiences requires careful planning and consideration of various factors, such as the location, the length of the stay, and the diversity of activities offered.

6.3 - Perspectives on Marketing, Communication, and Defining a Target Audience for Retreat Spaces:

Considering the perspectives on marketing, communication, and defining their target audience, retreat space owners and facilitators emphasized the importance of effective marketing and communication strategies to promote their holistic tourism experiences amidst the numerous other offers available in the market. They acknowledged the industry's growing popularity and competitiveness, making it challenging for customers to navigate through the plethora of available options and, as such, highlighted that marketing efforts need to stand out while still maintaining authenticity and quality. Positive word-of-mouth referrals were identified as a powerful tool for attracting participants and it was consensual that creating

authentic and transformative experiences that leave a lasting impression on guests can lead to positive recommendations and referrals. Customer feedback and satisfaction were recognized as essential components in building a reputable and credible image and one of the managers of a touristic space offering retreats mentioned a weekly-based analysis of their guest feedback in order to keep track of what they are doing well and what needs to be improved. While social media platforms were acknowledged as vital communication channels to reach potential attendees, some facilitators also highlighted the value of being featured in reputable articles, blogs, and magazines. Such media coverage enhances visibility and credibility, contributing to positive word-of-mouth and expanding the reach of the retreat experiences. Defining a target audience was another crucial consideration for retreat space owners and facilitators. Identifying the right demographic and tailoring retreat experiences to meet their needs and preferences was mentioned to be instrumental in attracting the desired clientele. However, the facilitators expressed challenges in defining a specific target audience, particularly when seeking to strike a balance between affordability and profitability. On this point, Facilitator B made an interesting remark:

“In my opinion, there are so many people who have the need to do something good for themselves, but so little people who can actually afford it, making the wellness industry something very luxurious. Not all people have the time nor the money to book an experience like this, which makes it hard to define a target audience. Of course, I want to do my best to help people with their struggles and with their lives, but at the same time I have the need to make money from my projects.”

Unsurprisingly, sustainability emerged as a core value among the retreat space owners and facilitators. Recognizing the impact of tourism on the environment and local communities, they emphasized the importance of incorporating sustainable practices into their retreat experiences. For instance, prioritizing locations with lower carbon footprints, sourcing local and seasonal products for meals, and promoting waste reduction through refillable packages were among the sustainable initiatives implemented. On this topic, Manager A had valuable insights, arguably because the enterprise in question has relatively larger operations when compared to other smaller projects:

“We really do our best to drive sustainability forward, but we are aware that as a tourism business, we cannot be fully sustainable: people fly to come to us and the

tourism/hospitality industry is in general not the most environmentally friendly. Here in Sri Lanka there is not much of an environmental awareness, so we try to promote some internal initiatives: we incentive guests to collect plastic every time they go to the beach, we organise monthly beach clean-ups, we provide shampoo and shower gel in refillable packages so people don't need to bring more plastic. We are actually looking into hiring someone to focus solely on sustainability, so we are very committed."

However, the challenge of striking a balance between sustainability and financial viability was also acknowledged, and while retreat space owners and facilitators value sustainability, some customers may not be willing to pay higher prices for eco-friendly experiences. Consequently, finding ways to integrate sustainability without compromising affordability and profitability seemed to be an ongoing challenge.

6.4 - Present state of the industry and future trends

Finally, interviewees were asked to give their impressions regarding the present state of the holistic tourism industry. All the retreat space owners and facilitators observed growing interest and demand for wellness and holistic experiences, but they also expressed considerable concerns about the increasing commercialization and profit-driven ventures that may compromise the authenticity and quality of retreat experiences. As the industry expands, customers may find it challenging to distinguish between genuine, transformative offerings and mass-market, generic options. Looking ahead, they also anticipated future trends that may shape the holistic tourism industry, and one potential trend involves combining diverse offerings under the same experience, such as yoga and hiking or yoga and climbing. Such combinations provide participants with a broader range of activities and experiences, catering to different interests and preferences. Additionally, there was a collective hope that the industry would prioritize authenticity and quality over commercialisation. Creating meaningful and transformative experiences with a human touch, rather than solely focusing on profits, was seen as pivotal in maintaining the essence of holistic tourism. The facilitators also expressed optimism about the potential growth in corporate wellness, as businesses increasingly prioritize the well-being of their employees.

The findings from interviews with retreat space owners and facilitators shed light on the multifaceted challenges they encounter when opening and managing wellness and retreat spaces while also offering valuable perspectives on organizing holistic tourism experiences,

defining target audiences, implementing sustainable practices, and envisaging future trends within the industry. The next section will focus on summarizing the key takeaways of all the interviews conducted before moving forward with addressing the viability of a project for a holistic tourism space in the region of Mafra, Portugal. The valuable inputs collected in the interviews from both the demand and supply sides will be crucial when considering the potential for a similar project in Portugal and designing an offer that is aligned with the industry's panorama.

6.5 - Synthesis and Implications

The findings reported in this chapter thoroughly examine the motivations, experiences, problems, priorities, and perspectives found in the holistic tourism and retreat business. A comprehensive knowledge of the varied environment of holistic tourism emerged from a series of in-depth interviews with stakeholders ranging from tourists seeking transformational experiences to retreat space owners and facilitators coping with business management challenges.

Individual motives for engaging in holistic tourism experiences and retreats are founded on a shared desire for personal growth, relaxation, and an escape from the tensions of modern life. This desire for self-discovery frequently manifests itself via participation in activities such as yoga and meditation, which are representative of the larger perspective on well-being that supports holistic tourism. Furthermore, the respondents emphasized the importance of disconnecting from the ever-present digital domain, highlighting the vital role of offline immersion in fostering individual well-being. The obstacles experienced by retreat space owners and facilitators in opening and sustaining wellness and retreat spaces were shown as an interplay of financial considerations, quality maintenance, and sustainability integration. The facilitators' experience acknowledged the importance of careful planning, the variability of demand, and the risk connected with upfront investments. A recurring problem was striking a balance between individualized services and scalability while maintaining the authenticity of transformational experiences, which is aligned with the question of authenticity that was also approached in the theoretical section of this study. Furthermore, the viewpoints on marketing, communication, and defining target audiences shed light on how tactics evolve in a competitive market. The relevance of customer recommendations,

sustainability integration, and the projection of future market trends were all discussed in the interviews.

The insights collected from the interviews conducted in this study reinforce the foundations laid by the theoretical overview. Notably, these findings demonstrate a correlation with the theoretical framework previously analysed, particularly in key areas such as emerging trends in holistic tourism. The interviewees' emphasis on the importance of retreats focused on meditation and mindfulness, as well as the appeal of offline retreats, echoes the theoretical framework's assertions about the evolving preferences of holistic travellers. Additionally, the interviews underscore the inherent desire among holistic travellers to embark on inward journeys, dedicating precious time to self-reflection and personal growth. The notion of 'loss of wellness', described in section 3.2.3 of Chapter 3, also found further corroboration through the insights shared by the interviewees. They emphasized the significance of participating in holistic tourism experiences as a means to temporarily escape their hectic daily routines, which often serve as a catalyst for their diminished sense of well-being. Other concepts explored in the theoretical framework, such as the "Seven Dimensions of Wellness" developed by the National Wellness Institute (2020), also were validated through the conducted interviews: Guest B specified the priority of engaging in touristic experiences that also contribute to the learning of a new skill, which connects with the intellectual dimension of wellness; Guest C mentioned the importance of group dynamics as a way to enhance the sense of belonging and social connectedness, which we can associate with the social dimension of wellness; and Guest D mentioned the value attributed to holistic venues located in natural and warm landscapes, which we can arguably connect with environmental wellbeing. Therefore, we can affirm that conclusions drawn from the interviews are aligned with the insights gathered in the theoretical background developed in the earlier section of this study.

In conclusion, these findings not only add to the debate around holistic tourism, but they also have practical implications for policymakers, industry practitioners, and potential entrepreneurs. The findings of this research serve as a starting point for the following chapter, in which this study will assess the potential of opening the holistic tourism space *Casa Doze* in Portugal, analyze the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats related to the venture, and consider the economic, environmental, and social sustainability aspects of such project. Using the information gleaned from these interviews, the following analysis will

attempt to connect the theoretical insights offered thus far with the practical issues of project execution.

Chapter 7: SWOT Analysis and Strategies for the Establishment of a Holistic Tourism Venue

In this chapter, we delve into the critical aspects of SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats) analysis and the subsequent formulation of strategies for the successful establishment of a holistic tourism venue. As we have explored some of the dimensions of the proposed venue in the preceding chapters, this chapter serves as a pivotal point where we assess the internal and external factors that can impact its success. By identifying strengths and weaknesses within the venue and recognizing opportunities and threats in the external environment (see table 9), we can develop targeted strategies to capitalize on strengths, mitigate weaknesses, harness opportunities, and defend against potential threats.

Table 9 - SWOT Analysis

<u>Strengths</u>	<u>Weaknesses</u>
<p>Diverse Offerings: Casa Doze will provide a wide range of holistic activities and workshops, including yoga, astrology, acupuncture, and holistic wellness retreats, attracting individuals seeking various well-being experiences.</p> <p>Location: Mafra's serene and unspoiled natural landscapes, proximity to the World Surf Reserve of Ericeira, and the Atlantic coastline offer an ideal setting for holistic experiences.</p> <p>Business Sustainability: The venue's dual function as a holistic destination for travellers and a community centre helps mitigate seasonality, ensuring year-round business sustainability.</p> <p>Community Engagement: By offering regular holistic experiences to the local community, Casa Doze will foster community engagement and contribute to the well-being of residents.</p>	<p>Niche Market: Holistic tourism caters to a specific niche market, which may limit the size of the customer base compared to more mainstream tourism sectors</p> <p>Financial Risks: Like many touristic spaces, Casa Doze faces financial risks associated with upfront investments and the unpredictability of attendee numbers, which could strain financial resources.</p> <p>Price: The prices to run a high-quality space, with reliable professionals and adopting sustainable practices from the core of the business will drive up the prices of the offers provided by Casa Doze, which can have limitations in terms of the target audience.</p>

<p>Experienced Service Providers: One of Casa Doze’s core missions is to provide quality and useful experiences and knowledge. Therefore, the facilitators and service providers will be carefully chosen and quality and experience will be prioritised.</p> <p>Sustainability Focus: Casa Doze emphasises sustainability through eco-friendly accommodations, permaculture gardens, and locally sourced, organic cuisine, aligning with the global trend towards responsible tourism.</p> <p>Offline Retreats: Mirroring the data collected from the interviews, Casa Doze will offer exclusive offline retreats, helping its guests to slow down and disconnect from the hustles of the outside world.</p>	
<p style="text-align: center;"><u>Opportunities</u></p> <p>Growing Demand: The increasing interest in holistic tourism and well-being experiences presents a significant opportunity for Casa Doze to attract a steady flow of tourists and local residents.</p> <p>Corporate Wellness: As businesses prioritize employee well-being, Casa Doze can tap into the corporate wellness market by offering tailored programs and retreats.</p> <p>Digital Nomadism: The increase of the so-called Digital Nomads, who travel the world while working remotely, represents an opportunity for Casa Doze to provide this audience with a high-quality medium-term stay focused on wellness and conscious living.</p> <p>Social Wellness: Well-being in all its dimensions is important for everyone. As the prices of wellness offers can often exclude those with lower purchasing power, Casa Doze can develop a concept of ‘Social Wellness’ to reach those who would otherwise not have access to these tools and knowledge.</p> <p>Collaboration: Partnerships with experienced facilitators, the involvement of the local community and the local knowledge, or collaboration with other local stakeholders interested in the field of Holistic Tourism represent an opportunity to create synergies that drive Casa Doze forward.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><u>Threats</u></p> <p>Competition: The holistic tourism industry is becoming increasingly competitive, with numerous options available to travellers. Standing out and attracting a consistent flow of visitors could be challenging.</p> <p>Scepticism: Holistic wellness practices often rely on alternative methods that are not yet widely popular in Western society. Therefore, there is a risk that scepticism plays a role here and makes it harder to attract visitors and guests.</p> <p>Supply Saturation: The interviewees expressed concerns about the increasing number of holistic offerings, potentially saturating the market and leading to competition for customers.</p> <p>Gentrification: There is the risk that the expat community and the tourists are those who engage the most with Casa Doze’s offers, thus contributing to the gentrification around this project.</p> <p>Commercialization: The holistic tourism industry’s commercialization and profit-driven ventures may lead to a dilution of authenticity and quality, making it harder for Casa Doze to stand out.</p>

Note: Own *elaboration*

a) Strengths

As shown in the abovementioned SWOT analysis, Casa Doze has a set of noteworthy strengths, making this envisioned holistic venue a promising project for the ever-evolving landscape of well-being and sustainable tourism. One of Casa Doze's standout attributes is its diverse array of holistic offerings. It stands as a haven for those in pursuit of holistic well-being, offering a rich cluster of experiences that cater to fulfilling all the wellness dimensions that were previously mentioned in the theoretical section of this study. From the serenity of yoga and the cosmic insights of astrology to the healing touch of acupuncture and the rejuvenation of holistic wellness retreats, Casa Doze opens its doors to individuals seeking various well-being experiences. This diversity ensures that Casa Doze's appeal transcends the boundaries of conventional tourism, promising a journey of personal growth and rejuvenation to seekers from all backgrounds.

With an innovative approach, Casa Doze functions as both a holistic destination for travellers and a vibrant community centre. This duality enhances its sustainability, mitigating the seasonality that often troubles tourism-dependent regions. By extending its holistic experiences to the local community, Casa Doze not only diversifies its revenue streams but also contributes to the well-being of Mafra's residents, fostering economic sustainability and job opportunities within the region. Furthermore, at the heart of Casa Doze's commitment to excellence lies the careful selection of facilitators and service providers. Quality and experience will take precedence in the recruitment process, ensuring that guests are guided by knowledgeable and passionate experts in their well-being endeavours. This dedication to service excellence will enhance the overall guest experience and reinforce Casa Doze's reputation as a trusted provider of authentic and transformative holistic experiences.

Casa Doze's emphasis on sustainability is also incorporated into the core of its operations. From eco-friendly accommodations that harmonize with the natural surroundings to meticulously cultivated permaculture gardens and a commitment to sourcing locally and organically, Casa Doze aligns itself with the global trend towards responsible tourism. This dedication to environmental stewardship not only resonates with environmentally conscious travellers but also positions Casa Doze as a good example of sustainable practices in the holistic tourism industry. In line with the United Nations's Sustainable Development Goals, Casa Doze will tackle three goals:

Goal 3: Good Health and Well-Being: By offering a diverse collection of holistic activities and wellness retreats, Casa Doze will provide guests with the tools and experiences they need to enhance their well-being in multiple dimensions. One of the targets of this goal is to prevent, treat, and promote mental health and well-being (*Sustainable Development Goals | United Nations Development Programme*, n.d.). Casa Doze will mainly act on the prevention and promotion of mental health and well-being, whether through short-term stays and retreats or the continuous offers around wellbeing that will be provided to the local community.

Goal 11: Sustainable Cities and Communities: Mafra is an area where there are still many small agricultural producers who own small and medium crops, making available a selection of organically produced products. By adopting sustainability throughout the whole extension of the supply chain and engaging in partnerships with local producers, Casa Doze will simultaneously contribute to the micro-economical development of the region and foster the sustainability practices already taking place. In this matter, a particular partnership will be envisioned with the local project *Vizinha*, a small regenerative farming project that aims to feed the local neighbourhoods with good vegetables, meanwhile regenerating the land for the next generation, assuring the quality of the meals prepared at the venue while contributing to the economic growth of the project.

Goal 12: Responsible Consumption and Production: As mentioned by Manager A and noted above in Chapter 6, tourism is not a fully sustainable business in itself: it often implies flying, it involves the exploitation of resources, and it generates waste. However, Casa Doze's commitment to responsible consumption and production represents a conscious effort to mitigate these challenges. Sustainable local sourcing is one of the main pillars of this enterprise, as mentioned in Goal 11, and so Casa Doze will prioritise seasonal and local products. Waste reduction and waste management will also be carefully planned and initiatives such as the use of refillable packages, composting organic waste, and encouraging recycling practices among guests will be prioritized.

Finally, we are arguably living in an era defined by constant digital connectivity and where the negative consequences of the online world often are shown in a deterioration of mental health: Cai et al. (2023) pointed out positive correlations between problematic internet use and depressive symptoms, anxiety, loneliness, and a negative relation with subjective

well-being. Furthermore, the interviews conducted with retreat guests also revealed that being offline highly contributed to the guests' enhanced sense of personal well-being. Based on this, Casa Doze recognizes the profound need for individuals to disconnect, slow down, and rediscover the beauty of the offline world, meaning that it will offer offline retreats that provide guests with a rest from the relentless pace of modern life. This offering will empower guests to embark on a journey of self-discovery and aims to enhance the benefits provided by the holistic practices and services taking place.

b) Weaknesses

Despite its many strengths, Casa Doze also faces certain weaknesses that call for our consideration. The main weakness of such a project is that like many touristic spaces, it will require substantial upfront investments in infrastructure, equipment, licensing, staff, and marketing. Although these costs are hard to accurately predict without a thorough financial analysis, which we highly recommend for further feasibility studies in the area of holistic tourism, we can estimate costs ranging from anywhere between 500,000€ to 2,500,000€ (*Discover the True Cost to Launch Your Very Own Wellness Retreat Center*, 2023), with the main variables influencing these costs being the size of the venue and the need to build new or renovate existing infrastructure. Nonetheless, despite the high startup costs associated with the enterprise, the goal of the author is to grow the project organically and not necessarily open it to the public only when every aspect of the business is fully finished. This means that, for example, Casa Doze could open its doors to the local community before having the offer for tourist stays fully ready, which would allow it to generate financial revenue right away. From a financing point of view, the project would be mainly financed via private funds of the owner and potential business partners and via European funds that support touristic enterprises, such as the program Turismo 2030 which aims to contribute to increasingly sustainable, responsible and intelligent tourism, promoting the enhancement and qualification of the territory, territorial and social cohesion, as well as the development of innovative products, services and businesses ('Transformar Turismo', n.d.). Still, it is important to mention that the unpredictability of attendee numbers, particularly during the initial stages of operation, poses a significant financial risk. A failure to attract a sufficient number of guests to cover expenses could strain Casa Doze's financial resources and long-term sustainability.

Striking a balance between financial stability and maintaining high-quality services will be an ongoing challenge.

Additionally, Casa Doze's commitment to providing top-quality experiences, complete with reliable professionals and sustainable practices, comes at a cost. While this commitment ensures a premium and transformative guest experience, it can also drive up the prices of the offerings. This pricing structure, while justified by the quality of services, may limit accessibility for a broader audience. Some potential guests with budget constraints may find it challenging to afford Casa Doze's premium services, necessitating careful consideration of how to reach a wider target audience without compromising quality, which is also one of the most relevant topics raised by Facilitator B in the interview. Nevertheless, this weakness can be transformed into an opportunity with the introduction of the concept of '*social wellness*', which in this case aims not to refer to the social dimension of wellness but rather to the social enterprise perspective of Casa Doze, where the more deprived audience will still benefit from holistic wellness offers. One of the mechanisms to make this possible is, for example, a sliding scale fee, meaning that the price of some of Casa Doze's offers would be adjusted depending on an individual's income. Finally, another weakness that is worth pointing out is the niche market focus of the project. While specializing in holistic tourism is a unique selling point, it inherently limits the size of the potential customer base compared to more mainstream tourism sectors. This niche market can be somewhat exclusive, potentially impacting the venue's reach and revenue potential.

These weaknesses represent areas where Casa Doze must engage in strategic planning and take proactive measures. Acknowledging and addressing these challenges will be essential to maximize the venue's market reach and long-term success in the holistic tourism industry.

c) Opportunities

Casa Doze stands at the forefront of a dynamic and evolving landscape in holistic tourism, where there are many opportunities to foster growth and make a lasting impact. One prominent opportunity lies in the ever-increasing demand for holistic and well-being experiences. With the modern traveller seeking transformative and authentic wellness

encounters, Casa Doze is well-positioned to attract a steady stream of tourists and local residents who crave these enriching journeys.

The corporate wellness sector also beckons as businesses prioritize the health and well-being of their employees. According to Inkwood Research, over the forecast period of 2023 to 2032, the market for workplace wellness in Europe is anticipated to rise with a CAGR of 6.50% in terms of revenue. Furthermore, the industry is anticipated to generate more than €40,000 million in revenue by 2032 ('EUROPE WORKPLACE WELLNESS MARKET FORECAST 2023-2032', n.d.). Casa Doze has the potential to carve a niche in this market by tailoring programs and retreats to cater to the specific needs of companies and their staff. This aligns Casa Doze's offerings with the shifting priorities of the corporate world, where holistic well-being is gaining prominence.

Another prominent market that Casa Doze will have the opportunity to explore is the wellness offers for digital nomads, individuals who combine remote work with travel, carving its way into the concept of *workation* - which means combining work and leisure to allow employees to relax and be more productive (*What Is a Workation?*, n.d.) - and adding the twist of wellness and well-being to it. Furthermore, some studies reveal that Lisbon is one of the most attractive places in Europe for digital nomads (*Europe's Best Cities for Digital Nomads*, 2023) and there are already 16,000 of these remote workers based in Lisbon ('Portugal's Digital Nomad Bubble Poised to Pop', 2023) By catering to this audience and providing extended stays that emphasize wellness and conscious living, Casa Doze can position itself as the ideal destination for digital nomads seeking work-life equilibrium within a holistic context. Casa Doze can also champion the abovementioned cause of 'Social Wellness,' addressing well-being across all socio-economic strata. Recognizing that wellness offerings can sometimes be financially exclusive, Casa Doze can create initiatives aimed at reaching those with more limited purchasing power, such as offering donation-based services or sliding scale prices, where the price will vary according to the individual's income and purchasing power. This commitment to social wellness extends the venue's reach and inclusivity, ultimately impacting the well-being of a broader and more diverse audience. Moreover, Casa Doze can leverage the power of collaboration. By partnering with experienced facilitators, actively involving the local community, and fostering relationships with other local stakeholders, such as the Vizinha project mentioned before, interested in holistic tourism, the venue can create synergies that propel its mission forward. Such

collaborations enrich the guest experience and contribute to Casa Doze's long-term success by tapping into a wider network of knowledge and resources.

Incorporating these opportunities into its strategy, Casa Doze can not only navigate the evolving landscape of holistic tourism but also become a pioneer in providing transformative well-being experiences for all.

d) Threats

Like any venture, Casa Doze also faces a set of challenges and threats that warrant careful consideration in its holistic tourism journey. One prominent concern is the intensifying competition within the holistic tourism industry. With a multitude of options available to travellers, such as the ones depicted in Table 5 above, differentiating Casa Doze and consistently attracting a steady flow of visitors poses a notable challenge. As the industry continues to grow, the need for a unique value proposition and effective marketing strategies becomes imperative and it will be essential for the long-term sustainability of the project. The interviewees in the holistic tourism industry expressed apprehensions about the escalating number of holistic offerings and the potential for saturation on the supply side. In such a scenario, competition for customers could intensify, requiring Casa Doze to carefully navigate the crowded landscape and find ways to distinguish itself without losing its authenticity. Another potential threat is rooted in scepticism. Holistic wellness practices often rely on alternative methods that may not yet be widely accepted in Western society. This lingering scepticism can act as a barrier, making it challenging to attract visitors and guests who may have reservations about these unconventional approaches to well-being. Building trust and credibility in this context is essential for Casa Doze. Moreover, gentrification presents another potential threat. While attracting expatriates and tourists to Casa Doze's offerings is a valuable endeavour, there is a risk that the project inadvertently contributes to gentrification in the surrounding area. Striking a balance that benefits both the local community and visitors is a delicate challenge that must be consciously navigated. Finally, commercialization within the holistic tourism industry poses a potential risk. As the industry becomes more profit-driven, there is a concern that the authenticity and quality of holistic experiences may dilute. This could make it harder for Casa Doze to stand out as a genuine and transformative destination. Maintaining the core values and mission while adapting to

evolving industry trends is a delicate balancing act that Casa Doze must undertake to mitigate this threat effectively.

While these threats are real and demand vigilance, Casa Doze can proactively address them through strategic planning, a commitment to authenticity, and a deep understanding of its target audience. By doing so, we can fortify its position in the holistic tourism landscape and continue to provide enriching well-being experiences to its visitors and the local community.

7.1 - Strategies and Recommendations

Based on the SWOT analysis undertaken, there are still some competitive strategies and recommendations that can be pointed out to boost Casa Doze's success in the holistic scene of Mafra and Lisbon. From our perspective, one of the key takeaways to the success of such a project is to ensure the authenticity of the experiences provided and to cultivate an atmosphere that welcomes guests and visitors and makes them feel comfortable and soothed. This means that the ambience of the venue must inspire guests and visitors to relax, unwind, and to disconnect from the restlessness of daily life. From our point of view, we believe that the key to creating this atmosphere lies in two aspects:

People: We firmly believe that the heart of a project lies in its people. The staff, partners, and collaborators must wholeheartedly embody the serene atmosphere envisioned for the venue. How the team communicates and interacts with guests, how they gracefully navigate unforeseen circumstances, and how they adeptly resolve day-to-day challenges all play a pivotal role in transmitting a profound sense of calm, confidence, and serenity. We hold the belief that a project's character is profoundly shaped by the individuals who bring it to life. Therefore, Casa Doze will be committed to a rigorous selection process for its partners and a strong focus on training and ongoing development to ensure they are aligned with its vision. This naturally includes providing employees with all the wellness offers we believe to be essential to the development of one's well-being.

Details: It is often said that the key to success lies in the details, and we do believe so. Being the author of this study a holistic tourist himself, he knows that many times what distinguishes a good venue from an excellent venue are the small things, such as the music being played in common spaces, the design and decoration used, how well kept a garden is,

or how smooth the check-in process is. All of these seemingly minor aspects can play a pivotal role in the art of distinguishing Casa Doze from the other holistic venues, so it is paramount that the managing team of the enterprise is attuned to the details.

Moreover, Casa Doze can aim to be more than just a holistic venue but rather a hub that brings together people with a common goal of enhancing the community's and guest's well-being. As such, other types of events can be occasionally hosted, such as farm-to-table dining experiences in partnership with chefs specialised in conscious eating, concerts, pop-up events such as workshops hosted by local farmers to teach visitors about natural farming techniques (the project Green Elbows, based in Ericeira and focused on teaching about natural farming methods, is a good example of a potential partnership), inviting renowned individuals in the wellness scene to share their knowledge, or incorporating a small book selection available to be acquired. These initiatives are just examples of how Casa Doze can become a hub for well-being and culture, fostering a distinctive position in the market and creating its own identity aside from all the other existing offers.

Chapter 8: Conclusion

This Master's Final Project was established with the main target of exploring the relationships between the concepts of holistic tourism, wellness tourism, and the tourism industry while keeping in mind the concept of sustainability. More specifically, this target had in mind three goals: to understand the existing literature on these topics and to gain a comprehensive understanding of the conceptualities behind them; to understand how the tourism industry is aligning with the concept of wellness and to assess the potential future trends arising in the wellness tourism industry; to explore the feasibility of opening a venue for holistic tourism with a sustainable approach in the region of Mafra. The purpose of investigating the dynamics between tourism and wellness was to see how they could be leveraged to create the enterprise Casa Doze and explore the potential factors contributing to providing the venue with a competitive advantage. Through the use of theoretical research, a comprehensive literature review, and valuable interviews conducted with holistic tourism stakeholders, we can happily affirm that these objectives were achieved.

The first section of the study, which consisted of a theoretical review of the existing literature around transformational tourism, holistic tourism, and wellness provided us with valuable insights into these concepts. This section revealed the links between holistic tourism and wellness, establishing a hierarchical connection between these concepts that was paramount for the consistency and coherence of the whole study. It hinted into the philosophical intricacies that often lie behind the concept of wellness, especially when we look at it from a holistic point of view, addressing all its dimensions, and exploring why modern Western society is arguably on a quest for wellness and well-being. This theoretical review set up the stage for the next chapters as it provided us with the strong conviction that the tourism industry has indeed an important role in contributing to the increase of wellness for those who seek it.

The next section provided us with a valuable overview of the feasibility of opening a holistic venue in the region of Mafra, which we entitled *Casa Doze*. An examination of the current status of the holistic tourism sector in the region of Mafra proved the potential for such enterprise and, again, reassured us of the pertinence of the study. The semi-structured interviews with seven stakeholders of the holistic tourism industry gave us valuable insights into the priorities, challenges, and future trends of this sector and were aligned with the theoretical evidence that was previously analysed in the first section. The interviews confirmed the importance of tourist offers revolving around retreats and education on holistic wellness topics and revealed common topics among tourists, such as the valorization of being disconnected from the internet and social media and the need to have time to be fully dedicated to oneself. The methodology used to analyse the semi-structured interviews, which followed a thematic approach and involved the identification and categorization of key themes and patterns that emerged from the interview transcripts, also proved to be successful as it provided us with solid indications on future trends and consumer preferences when it comes to holistic tourism experiences.

Despite the success in examining the feasibility of launching a holistic tourism venue in the Mafra region, this study does have its limitations that warrant acknowledgement. One limitation pertains to the fact that only three interviews were conducted with individuals who either experienced or organized holistic tourism experiences in Mafra. Given the evolving nature of the sector in this region, expanding the dataset to incorporate a more extensive pool of perspectives would enhance the comprehensiveness of future research. Furthermore, this

study lacks an in-depth financial analysis that would scrutinize the intricacies of costs associated with the Casa Doze project. This omission includes aspects such as detailed legal expenses tied to such an undertaking and a comprehensive financial overview of the Mafra real estate market, providing concrete figures regarding property acquisition and renovation. Conducting such a financial analysis would serve to underpin subsequent feasibility studies and empower potential entrepreneurs with critical information to inform decisions regarding the establishment of a holistic tourism venue in Mafra.

To conclude, this study has embarked on a journey to explore the intersections of holistic tourism, wellness, and the feasibility of a holistic venue in Mafra. The findings, although preliminary, provide a strong foundation upon which future research and entrepreneurial endeavours can be built. As we conclude this chapter, we acknowledge that the quest for holistic wellness through tourism is an ongoing narrative, and our study, we hope, serves as a stepping stone in a broader journey towards enhancing well-being and personal transformation in the ever-evolving landscape of the tourism industry.

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Appendix

Interviewee profile

Interviewee	Age	Nationality	Project Involved	Location
Guest A	25	Portuguese	Vipassana Meditation	Spain
Guest B	24	Austrian	Talala Retreat	Sri Lanka
Guest C	56	Portuguese	Centro de Salud Vital Zuhaizpe	Spain
Guest D	28	German	Wurzelwerkstatt	Portugal
Facilitator A	33	German	Holistic Business Retreat	Germany
Facilitator B	31	Austrian	Wurzelwerkstatt	Portugal/Austria
Manager A	34	English	Soul and Surf	Sri Lanka

Set of Interview Questions by Interviewee Profile:

Guests/Users

1. What would you say if someone asked you to give your reasons for going on a holistic experience/retreat?
2. Why did you choose this specific type of holistic experience?
3. What does the experience of being on a holistic tourism experience/retreat mean to you?
4. Do you think that holistic experiences/retreat spaces are healing or therapeutic in any way? How?
5. What kind of activities do you value the most when attending a holistic experience?
6. Are the activities you mentioned already part of your daily routine?
7. What are the main benefits you received from this experience?
8. What difference do you think having this experience will make in your life and in your holistic well-being?
9. Is it important for you that the tourism facilities where you engage in retreats and holistic experiences adopt sustainable practices? For example, respecting and integrating the culture of local communities, serving meals with locally sourced ingredients, and having green energy sources.
10. Will you continue to look for wellness vacations and holistic experiences? Will you stick to the resorts and destinations you already know, or would you consider venturing to new destinations (namely Portugal)?

Owners/Managers of Retreat Spaces

1. What are the main challenges and struggles when opening a wellness and retreat space? For example licencing, competition, socio-economic factors, etc.
2. What are the main challenges and struggles when managing a wellness and retreat space?
3. What are the main issues to consider when it comes to marketing, communication, and defining your target audience?
4. Is sustainability an important aspect of the business? What are the greatest challenges and benefits that arise from implementing sustainable business practices?

5. What is your perception regarding the present state of wellness/retreat tourism and what are your perspectives on future trends?

Retreat Facilitators

1. What are the main priorities when organising a wellness and retreat experience? For example location, price, duration, season, competition, socio-economic factors, etc.
2. What are the main challenges and struggles when organising a wellness and retreat experience?
3. What are the main issues to consider when it comes to marketing, communication, and defining your target audience?
4. Is sustainability an important aspect of the business? What are the greatest challenges and benefits that arise from implementing sustainable business practices?
5. Can you give some examples of how are you implementing sustainable practices in your business?
6. What are your perceptions of the present state of wellness/retreat tourism and your perspectives on future trends?