

## Articles – Tourism Management

# International entrepreneurship in the tourist destination of Porto de Galinhas-PE

## Empreendedorismo internacional no destino turístico de Porto de Galinhas-PE

## Emprendimiento internacional en el destino turístico de Porto de Galinhas-PE

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International entrepreneurship;  
Porto de Galinhas;  
Tourist destination.

### Palavras-chave:

Empreendedorismo internacional;  
Porto de Galinhas;  
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### Palabras clave:

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### Abstract

This study aims to investigate international entrepreneurship (IE) in organizations located in Porto de Galinhas, Brazil. To facilitate the investigation, a case study was conducted within the framework of qualitative research. Data were collected using an interview protocol applied to 17 interlocutors from companies, governmental institutions, and local associations. Content analysis was carried out with the support of ATLAS.ti software. The research highlights the conceptual challenge of international entrepreneurship, stemming from the geographic diversity and variety of sectoral contexts present in the destination. The findings indicate that the relationship between tourism and international entrepreneurship is relevant to the region from both economic and social perspectives. Finally, it is noteworthy that Porto de Galinhas has evolved as a tourist destination in response to external challenges, fostering international entrepreneurship and inducing significant changes in business models and local economic interactions.

### Resumo

Este estudo tem como objetivo investigar o Empreendedorismo Internacional (EI) em organizações de Porto de Galinhas (Brasil). Para viabilizar a investigação, adotou-se um estudo de caso no âmbito da pesquisa qualitativa. Utilizou-se como instrumento de coleta de dados um roteiro de entrevista para acessar 17 interlocutores de empresas, instituições governamentais e associações locais. A análise de conteúdo foi realizada com o apoio do software ATLAS.ti. A pesquisa expressa o desafio conceitual do empreendedorismo internacional devido à existência de diversidade geográfica e variedade de contextos setoriais no destino. Os resultados indicam que a relação entre turismo e empreendedorismo internacional é relevante para a região, tanto do ponto de vista econômico quanto social. Por fim, vale ressaltar que Porto de Galinhas tem evoluído como destino turístico em resposta a desafios externos, fomentando o empreendedorismo internacional e induzindo mudanças significativas nos modelos de negócios e nas interações econômicas locais.

### Resumen

Este estudio tiene como objetivo investigar el Emprendimiento Internacional (EI) en organizaciones de Porto de Galinhas (Brasil). Para facilitar la investigación, se adoptó un estudio de caso en el marco de una investigación cualitativa. Se empleó un guion de entrevista como instrumento de recopilación de datos para acceder a 17 interlocutores de empresas, instituciones gubernamentales y asociaciones locales. El análisis de contenido se realizó con el apoyo del software ATLAS.ti. La investigación refleja el desafío conceptual del emprendimiento internacional debido a la diversidad geográfica y la variedad de contextos sectoriales en el destino. Los resultados indican que la relación entre el turismo y el emprendimiento internacional es relevante para la región, tanto desde el punto de vista económico como social. Finalmente, cabe mencionar que Porto de Galinhas ha evolucionado como destino turístico en respuesta a los desafíos externos, fomentando el emprendimiento internacional e induciendo cambios significativos en los modelos de negocio y las interacciones económicas locales.



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## 1 INTRODUCTION

The inherent competitiveness of the global market challenges companies to pursue greater profitability and encourages the adoption of strategies that promote interaction with external markets (Wright & Ricks, 1994; Ahsan & Fernhaber, 2019; Stojčić *et al.*, 2021). In this regard, Ahsan and Fernhaber (2019) emphasize that achieving international expansion requires an understanding of the factors that drive organizations to extend their operations beyond national boundaries.

From this perspective, the role of international entrepreneurship (IE) is noteworthy in guiding companies toward profitability in international markets. The concept of IE can be defined as “the discovery, implementation, evaluation, and exploitation of opportunities—across national boundaries—to create future goods and services” (Oviatt & McDougall, 2005, p. 7). This strategic orientation is realized through improvements in operational processes, the promotion of an entrepreneurial culture, and the strengthening of interorganizational relationships (Oviatt & McDougall, 1994, 1997, 2005; Zahra, 2021, 2022; Zucchella, 2021). These practices not only contribute to gaining a competitive advantage for the business but also enable companies to operate more effectively in the global context (McDougall, 1989), as exemplified in the tourism sector.

In recent decades, the tourism industry has emerged as a highly profitable and socioeconomically significant sector in several countries (World Tourism Organization, 2021). As pointed out by Vinodan and Meera (2021), realizing the economic, cultural, and environmental potential of tourism requires integrating a region’s historical, cultural, and natural assets. Within this context, the focus of the present study, Porto de Galinhas, located in the state of Pernambuco, Brazil, covers approximately 90 kilometers of coastline and encompasses beaches and sites of historical significance. It is recognized as the leading sun-and-sea destination in Pernambuco (Brazil, 2021a). Tourism constitutes one of the region’s principal economic activities, and the destination is renowned for its natural beauty, hotel infrastructure, and high-quality gastronomy, all of which contribute to its appeal (Lima *et al.*, 2022). Moreover, Porto de Galinhas has gained both national and international prominence (Santana *et al.*, 2022).

This topic is considered innovative. According to Santos *et al.* (2020), Honggang and Shaoyin (2014), sun-and-sea environments strengthen the tourism production chain, fostering the creation of international opportunities and promoting local development. In line with this perspective, Li (2018) and Fernhaber *et al.* (2008) emphasize that understanding entrepreneurship and regional development is essential for organizational growth. However, Carson *et al.* (2017) note that undertaking international ventures in tourist destinations involves strategic challenges, aspirations for business expansion, and government interventions. In this regard, the corporate characteristics of tourism organizations also influence the development of international entrepreneurship in a given destination. Carson *et al.* (2017) further explain that organizational features, such as commercial and operational culture and strategic skills, enable the advancement of international entrepreneurship in tourist destinations.

Felzensztein *et al.* (2019) also highlight the importance of examining barriers to the internationalization of economic activities, as well as the factors that enhance corporate performance and generate opportunities for improvement. Understanding business performance in relation to international entrepreneurship is, therefore, one of the gaps this study seeks to address. Consequently, this research aims to investigate international entrepreneurship in organizations operating in Porto de Galinhas.

In light of these considerations, this research is organized into five sections: following this introduction, Section 2 reviews the literature on International Entrepreneurship (IE) and Tourism; Section 3 outlines the methodology; Section 4 presents the results and discussion; and Section 5 offers the conclusion.

## 2 LITERATURE REVIEW

### 2.1 International Entrepreneurship (IE)

International Entrepreneurship (IE) is defined as a corporate activity that transcends national borders in pursuit of above-average profitability, focusing on commercial relations between companies and the international environ-

ment (Zahra, 2021, 2022; Zucchella, 2021). The entrepreneur plays a central role in this process, and entrepreneurial behavior may be influenced by the environment in which the individual operates (Audretsch et al., 2021; Bucciari et al., 2021).

The first discussion of the topic appeared in Morrow (1988); however, McDougall (1989) is notable for presenting the first theoretical-empirical research on commercial transactions between domestic and international companies. According to Ahmed and Brennan (2021), the construct is characterized by a wide diversity of contexts and is portrayed in complementary ways across a variety of studies.

It is pertinent to present the model proposed by Dimitratos and Plakoyannaki (2003), which identifies five fundamental dimensions of international entrepreneurship, namely: identification of international opportunities, predisposition to risk, networking capabilities, inclination toward innovation, and market adaptability. In addition, Crick and Crick (2022) emphasize resources as a further dimension of International Entrepreneurship (IE), one that supports the attainment of competitive advantage and the creation of business value. These characteristics guide corporations in the design of goods and services (Chakravarty et al., 2021) and assist entrepreneurs in promoting and implementing strategies that facilitate access to foreign markets (Oviatt & McDougall, 2005). Thus, the multidimensional nature of IE plays an essential role in advancing corporations within the international market. Regarding these dimensions, Reuber et al. (2017) emphasize the importance of understanding them, as the relationship between the dimensions and organizational development in international contexts is well established.

Zucchella (2021) notes that examining the dimensions of international entrepreneurship offers a comprehensive understanding of the variables that contribute to the internationalization process. In this sense, several scholars argue that the purpose of internationalization is to cross national borders through the export of tangible and intangible resources (Zucchella, 2021; Zahra, 2021; Crick & Crick, 2022; Etemad, 2021; Nave & Ferreira, 2022). This process seeks to position organizations competitively in the global market, with the objectives of increasing revenues and fostering organizational growth (Nave & Ferreira, 2022; Child et al., 2022). García-Cabrera and García-Soto (2023) find that the effects of each dimension on an organization's international expansion depend on the interaction and complementarity among the dimensions, emphasizing "the promotion of a culture conducive to successful and expansive entrepreneurship, consistent with the local idiosyncrasies of each territory" (García-Cabrera & García-Soto, 2023, p. 55).

## 2.2 International Entrepreneurship and Tourism

Convergences between International Entrepreneurship (IE) and international tourism are evident. From a tourism perspective, the dimensions of IE emphasize the uniqueness of tourism offerings and encourage local stakeholders to recognize and value the regional resources (Mira & Breda, 2021). According to these authors, the integration of products, services, and tourism experiences within a region contributes significantly to the expansion of economic activities on a global scale. Pine II and Gilmore (1998) and Gosling et al. (2016) state that local identity implies authentic tourism products, offering international visitors distinctive experiences shaped by the territory's characteristics. In this context, the attributes of a tourist destination directly influence international entrepreneurship.

Humeniuk et al. (2020, p.1) observe that "in the last two decades, international tourism has grown on average 3.5-4% per year" and add that, internationally, the sector continues to expand through the provision of services. The opening of new negotiation channels facilitates entry into foreign markets and supports business expansion in the international arena, reinforcing the trend toward internationalization and the growing relevance of IE (Rodrigues & Dieleman, 2018; Bucciari et al., 2020; Etemad et al., 2021).

Internationalization in tourism involves attracting international travelers in search of distinctive offerings, cultural and natural attractions inherent to the geographic region (Mira & Breda, 2021), features that are unlikely to leave the country of origin, but can be marketed internationally. Mira and Breda (2021) explain that international opportunities often arise from territorial attributes. Elements such as local contexts, natural, cultural, and heritage resources, as well as unique products and services rooted in the destination's identity (Audretsch et al., 2021; Santos et al., 2020; Pulido-Fernández et al., 2022; Schweizer et al., 2010), enhance the positioning of economic activities, enable entry into new markets, and promote the authenticity of the territory (Mira & Breda, 2021; Crick & Crick, 2022).

Khmelyarchuc et al. (2019) argue that tourist destinations must recognize themselves as benchmarks for economic development in the global market. Based on their actions in foreign trade, destinations can position their countries as international senders or receivers. In tourism research, relationship networks are often linked to regional systems formed by local agents, companies, and government institutions (Mira & Breda, 2021; Kyfyak & Kyfyak., 2021).

Zucchella (2021) notes that multiple actors within the entrepreneurial ecosystem facilitate strategic advancements at the network level and foster corporate growth in foreign markets. Nave and Ferreira (2022) further confirm that geographic location can be a driving force for business development in the global arena. Therefore, tourist destinations contribute to the evolution of local structures, the strengthening of production chains, the diversification of tourist demands, and the appreciation of territorial identity (Santos *et al.*, 2020; Pulido-Fernández *et al.*, 2022), thereby attracting international visitors to the domestic market (Mira & Breda, 2021). Finally, it is observed that IE supports strategic decision-making and deepens understanding of the organizational environment in the global economy. According to Zucchella (2021), regardless of the size of the entrepreneurial company, IE can be effectively applied to navigate and compete within the global market.

### 3 METHODOLOGY

This study employed a qualitative research approach (Godoy, 2005) through the case study method (Eisenhardt, 1989). The research was conducted in the municipality of Ipojuca, Pernambuco, focusing on Porto de Galinhas beach and its surrounding areas. Tourism in this region expanded considerably between 1990 and 1999, marked by the emergence and growth of various lodging facilities, including 20 inns, 11 private hotels, 2 hotels, and 1 hostel, in addition to numerous tourism-oriented commercial establishments such as bars, restaurants, designer shops, and souvenir shops (Mesquita & Xavier, 2013). With this growth, Porto de Galinhas and nearby areas consolidated their status as nationally and internationally recognized destinations, attracting real estate investment and hotel developments (Cruz, 2000). Since the 2000s, more than ten new projects, including resorts, apartment complexes, and high-income gated communities, have been built, contributing to tourism development in the region (Macêdo, 2015). Currently, the destination has 16 hotels, 230 inns, and 120 restaurants (Porto de Galinhas Hotel Association, n.d.; Porto de Galinhas Convention & Visitors Bureau, n.d.).

The selection of this region was based on three main criteria: a) the fact that the tourist destination ranks 11th in international tourist demand in Brazil (Brasil, 2021a); b) over time, the destination has faced multiple challenges arising from the external environment (Braga *et al.*, 2013); and c) it is the leading “Sun and Sea” tourist destination in the state of Pernambuco (Brasil, 2021a). Regarding the eligibility criteria for interviewees, the following were considered: a) Private companies - tourism enterprises of various sizes operating in Porto de Galinhas that receive international tourists and implement deliberate strategies to attract them; b) Public institutions and local associations – representatives responsible for programs promoting international tourism and associations engaged in attracting international events and fairs; e) Local stakeholders - entrepreneurs, managers, directors, and coordinators of private companies operating in the destination with direct interaction with international travelers.

Regarding the selected region, some data published in November 2023 by the Pernambuco Tourism Company (EM-PETUR) are relevant to this study, specifically concerning the origin of international and national tourists and their average length of stay. Among international visitors, Argentines and Uruguayans account for 41.67% and 16.67% respectively, while domestic visitors mainly originate from São Paulo (52.08%) and Recife, the state capital (39.58%). On average, international tourists stay 9 days at the location, compared with 6 days for domestic visitors (World Tourism Organization, 2025; EMPETUR, 2023).

Before applying the interview protocol, a pilot study was conducted to validate its content. The semi-structured interview script was tested with the marketing manager of the tourism department of the State of Paraíba and a hotel manager from the city of Recife-PE who works for an international hotel chain.

In the first stage of the research, semi-structured interviews were conducted via telephone and online, through Google Meet. All sessions were recorded and transcribed, along with the corresponding interview script. The interviews also helped identify participating companies through the snowball sampling method, in which subjects were selected and interviewed concurrently. The snowball method was intended to select participants and organizations involved in regional development initiatives. Furthermore, this research also adopted Bardin's content analysis method to examine the data, using ATLAS.ti software for coding and analysis. In ATLAS.ti, coding and recoding enable the creation of network diagrams that reveal complex interactions between codes and themes, thereby supporting the interpretation process (Adelowotan, 2021). In total, 36 codes were identified, 19 related to the international entrepreneurship construct and 17 to the tourism cluster. The ATLAS.ti IDs shown in the fifth column of Table 1 refer to the interviewees and were assigned to protect their identities. Bardin (2016) argues that codes function as markers to identify elements, subjects, or documents relevant to the research.

Table 1 shows the interviewees' profiles. Each interviewee is identified by a code corresponding to the company (pseudonym) they represent, their position, length of service in the organization, academic background, and their ATLAS.ti identity (a system-generated code). In total, 17 interviews were conducted.

**Table 1** - Respondent profile

Collection Mode	Interviewee Codes and Positions	Training	Time in Function (Years)	Interview Time	ID no ATLAS.ti
Virtual (Google Meet/phone)	Partner - Commercial Director, Agency-A	Tourism	31	50 min 40 sec	D1
Phone	Director, Agency-B	Administration and Law	15	37 min 59 sec	D13
Virtual (Google Meet)	Marketing Manager, Digital Platform-A	Tourism	8	22 min 45 sec	D2
Phone	Copywriter, Digital Platform-B	Journalism	4	35 min 38 sec	D6
Phone	Director, Digital Platform-B	Undisclosed	4	31 min 01 sec	D10
Phone	Director, Jangadeiros Associative Entity-A	Undisclosed	11	26 min 03 seg	D3
Virtual (Google Meet)	Director, Bars and Restaurants Association-B	Tourism	2	23 min 20 sec	D4
Virtual (Google Meet)	Director, Hotel Association-C	Tourism	22	37 min 58 sec	D7
Phone	Director, Bars and Restaurants Association-D	Economy	12	23 min 08 sec	D12
Virtual (Google Meet)	General Manager, Hotel-A	Hotel industry	14	25 min 19 sec	D5
Virtual (Google Meet)	Commercial Director, Hotel-B	Tourism	16	37 min 33 sec	D9
Virtual (Google Meet)	Food and Beverage Manager, Hotel-C	Hospitality and Gastronomy	3	48 min 22 sec	D15
Virtual (Google Meet)	Commercial Director, Hotel-D	Administration	33	34 min 58 sec	D16
Virtual (Google Meet)	Commercial Director, Hotel-E	Economy	24	57 min 33 sec	D17
Virtual (Google Meet)	Commercial Executive, Travel Operator-A	Tourism	20	22 min 35 sec	D8
Virtual (Google Meet)	Partner, Travel Operator-B	Tourism	12	50 min 20 sec	D11
Virtual (Google Meet)	General Manager, Reception	Administration	11	18 min 38 sec	D14

**Source:** Prepared by the author (2025).

Secondary data analysis was used (Eisenhardt, 1989). Using the descriptors "International tourism in Porto de Galinhas" and "Foreign tourists in Porto de Galinhas", 1,855 reports published between 2019 and 2023 were retrieved from the following magazines: Panrotas (430), Hotelier news (125), Jornal do Comércio (700), HSM Management (0), Diário de Pernambuco (371), and Mercado e eventos (229). However, the total number of valid articles was 54 documents.

The cross-analysis of the semi-structured interviews and the selected articles allowed for methodological triangulation, enhancing the reliability of the study (Nunes *et al.*, 2020). Regarding the analytical description of the data, 61 documents (interviews and reports) were coded in ATLAS.ti, yielding 674 citations relevant to the research scope. For interpretation, a network consisting of codes and characteristics of international entrepreneurship was created.

## 4 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The objective of this research was to examine international entrepreneurship in organizations operating in Porto de Galinhas. Analysis of the empirical data indicates a direct relationship between the frequency of international visitors to the destination and external environmental factors.

Regarding the origin of foreign tourists, the Commercial Director of Hotel-E reported a change in the profile of the international public, noting an increased presence of European visitors. He explained: “[...] Porto de Galinhas must receive about 10% of its visitors as foreign tourists. Mostly Argentines, Uruguayans, and Paraguayans, followed by



Chileans and Portuguese. But in the past it was mainly Europeans, right?" When asked about the reasons for the change in the international public, the Commercial Director-Hotel-E explains that:

[...] It was the crisis in Europe and the United States. The crisis in South American banks, as well as Lehman Brothers, and others. Then came the crisis in the United States, which also hit Europe. That brought everything to a standstill, and they never returned to the same pace. They started traveling more to the Caribbean. At that time, there were also many charter flights from Europe to Brazil, especially to the Northeast of Brazil. Nowadays, there are no more [...].

The interviewees consistently attributed the change in the international audience to external environmental influences. Factors such as public health crises, changes in air routes to other tourist destinations, reductions in tax incentives for new businesses, and inadequate infrastructure contributed to the dispersion and/or reconfiguration of the international audience. Supporting this finding, Ahmed and Brennan (2021) affirm that the environmental conditions affect both the business context and market strategies. As Schweizer *et al.* (2010) note, such factors can steer companies into unfamiliar markets, creating instability and uncertainty in the internationalization process.

Buccieri *et al.* (2021) highlight the impact of external factors on entrepreneurial behavior. According to Audretsch *et al.* (2021), entrepreneurs act as agents of transformation within the economic system, guiding business leaders toward more effective strategies. In this context, risk-taking capacity and proactive engagement are essential for promoting business development.

Aligned with this discussion, Table 2 presents the dimensions of IE identified in the tourism activities of Porto de Galinhas that contribute to the internationalization of local organizations.

**Table 2** - Dimensions of international entrepreneurship in Porto de Galinhas (continue)

Dimensions of IE	Subcategories	Companies	Theoretical contribution
Attitude towards risk	International motivation	Hotel E; Hotel Association; Digital Platform; Bars and Restaurants Association - Digital Platform and Agency A.	Dimitratos and Plakoyannaki (2003) Etemad (2021); Ipsmiller and Dikova (2021)
Ability to innovate	Innovative management practices	Agency B; Hotel B; Hotel E; Hotel D; Hotel Association; Digital Platform B; Travel Operator A; Digital Platform A; Digital Platform B; Agency A and Travel Operator B.	Child <i>et al.</i> (2022); Dimitratos and Plakoyannaki (2003)
	Use of technology in products/services and management practices	Agency B; Hotel B; Hotel E; Hotel Association C; Digital Platform B; Travel Operator A; Hotel C; Digital Platform A; Hotel A; Digital Platform B; Agency A and Travel Operator B.	Ahmed e Brennan (2021); Buccieri, <i>et al.</i> (2021); Dimitratos and Plakoyannaki (2003); Ipsmiller and Dikova (2021); Nave & Ferreira (2022)
International opportunities	Creativity and entrepreneurial skills to explore international opportunities	Hotel B; Hotel E; Hotel Association C; Digital Platform B; Travel Operator A; Digital Platform A; Digital Platform B and Travel Operator B.	Ahmed e Brennan (2021); Child <i>et al.</i> (2022); Dimitratos and Plakoyannaki (2003); Etemad (2022); Santos <i>et al.</i> (2020); Schweizer <i>et al.</i> (2010)
	Global mindset	Hotel B; Hotel E; Hotel D; Hotel Association C; Digital Platform B; Travel Operator A; Hotel C; Digital Platform B; Agency A and Travel Operator B.	Crick and Crick (2022); Etemad (2022); Nave and Ferreira (2022); Tabares (2021)
	Business proactivity	Hotel E; Hotel D; Hotel Association C; Digital Platform B; Travel Operator A; Digital Platform A; Hotel A; Digital Platform B; Agency A and Travel Operator B.	Ahmed and Brennan (2021); Dimitratos and Plakoyannaki (2003); Nave and Ferreira (2022); Schweizer <i>et al.</i> (2010)Zuchella (2021)
Propensity to adapt	Flexibility for business development	Hotel E; Hotel D; Hotel Association C; Digital Platform B; Digital Platform B; Agency A and Travel Operator B.	Crick and Crick (2022); Etemad (2022); Nave and Ferreira (2022); Schweizer <i>et al.</i> (2010); Zhara (2021); Zuchella (2021)
Relationship networks	Trust between companies	Agency B; Hotel B; Hotel E; Hotel D; Hotel Association C; Bars and Restaurants Association D; Bars and Restaurants Association B; Rafting Association A; Travel Operator A; Hotel C; Digital Platform A; Hotel A; Digital Platform B; Agency A; Travel Operator B and Reception.	Child <i>et al.</i> (2022); Crick and Crick (2022); Dimitratos and Plakoyannaki (2003); Nave and Ferreira (2022); Schweizer <i>et al.</i> (2010); Zhara (2021); Zuchella (2021)
	Collaborative behavior	Agency B; Hotel B; Hotel E; Hotel D; Hotel Association C; Bars and Restaurants Association D; Marketing Manager - Digital Platform; Rafting Association A; Travel Operator A; Hotel C; Digital Platform A; Hotel A; Digital Platform B; Agency A; Travel Operator B and Reception.	Buccieri <i>et al.</i> (2021); Child <i>et al.</i> (2022); Crick & Crick (2022); Etemad (2022); Mira & Breda (2021); Zhara (2021); Zuchella (2021)

**Table 2** - Dimensions of international entrepreneurship in Porto de Galinhas

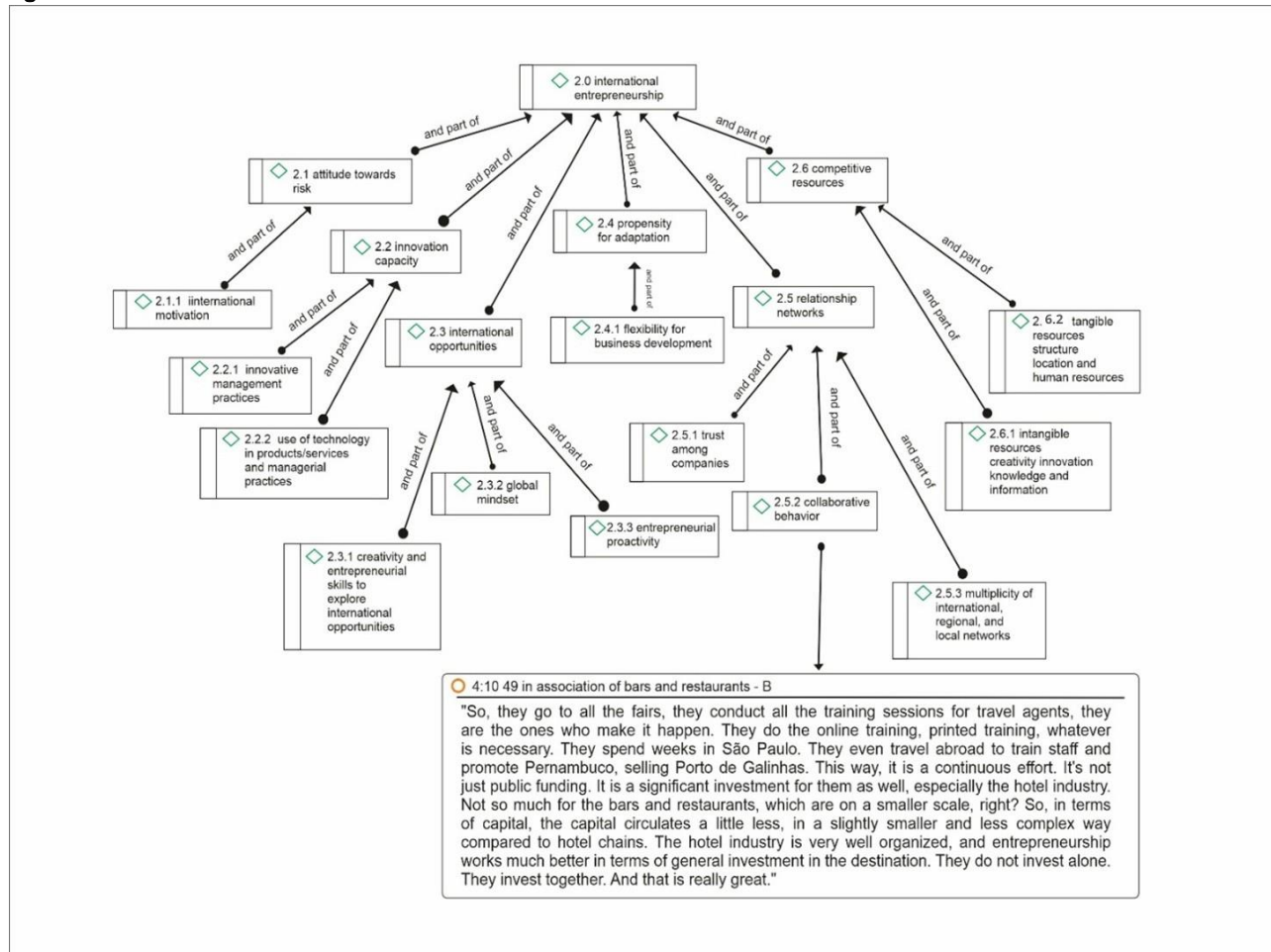
(conclusion)

Dimensions of IE	Subcategories	Companies	Theoretical contribution
Relationship networks	Multiplicity of international, regional and local networks	Agency B; Hotel B; Hotel E; Hotel D; Hotel Association C; Bar and Restaurant Association D; Marketing Manager - Digital Platform A; Travel Operator A; Hotel C; Digital Platform A; Travel Operator B and Reception.	Andersson <i>et al.</i> (2013); Buccieri, <i>et al.</i> (2021); Child <i>et al.</i> (2022); Crick & Crick (2022); Mira and Breda (2021); Nave and Ferreira (2022); Schweizer <i>et al.</i> (2010); Zhara (2021); Zuchella (2021)
Competitive resources	Intangible resources – creativity, innovation, knowledge and information	Hotel E; Hotel D; Hotel Association C; Bars and Restaurants Association D; Marketing Manager - Digital Platform A; Rafts Association A; Travel Operator A; Hotel C; Digital Platform A; Hotel A; Digital Platform B; Agency A; Travel Operator B and Reception.	Etmad (2022); Mira and Breda (2021); Zhara (2022)
	Tangible resources – structure, location and human resources	Agency B; Hotel B; Hotel E; Hotel D; Hotel Association C; Bars and Restaurants Association D; Bars and Restaurants Association B; Marketing Manager - Digital Platform A; Rafts Association A; Travel Operator A; Hotel C; Digital Platform A; Hotel A; Digital Platform B; Agency A; Travel Operator B and Reception.	Crick and Crick (2022); Etmad (2022); Mira and Breda (2021); Schweizer <i>et al.</i> (2010); Zhara (2021)

Source: Prepared by the author (2025).

When analyzing tourism activities and their relationship with the institutional structure (IS), the findings indicate a limited presence of international entrepreneurship in the destination associations. Although most institutions are composed primarily of entrepreneurs, only one of the four associations interviewed, the Hotel Association–C, demonstrated a notable occurrence of international entrepreneurship dimensions. According to the Director of Hotel Association–C: The Association works very effectively in this area to maintain the destination's occupancy rate. [...] What will be the strategy for our recovery? If you look at and talk to market players, it is in addressing these major challenges that it becomes clear what is worthwhile to do. This proactive approach allowed Porto de Galinhas' recovery to occur ahead of other destinations in the Northeast [...].

Child *et al.* (2022) explain that immersing oneself in the social, economic, and cultural structures of a region enhances how productive activities develop strategies for the international market. Similarly, Audretsch *et al.* (2021) believe that integrating these components within a region helps foster business evolution and growth. However, as shown in Table 2, the associative entities in the destination still lack a clear understanding of their strategic role. Kyfyak and Kyfyak (2021) clarify that public-private partnerships should be viewed as a competitiveness strategy to improve organizational performance locally. Therefore, the destination's production chain needs to distinguish between the barriers that limit commercialization and the dimensions of international entrepreneurship that facilitate engagement in foreign markets. In this context, it is important to clarify that dimensions of international entrepreneurship, such as relationship networks, attitude toward international risk, aptitude for innovation (Reuber *et al.*, 2017), exploration of international opportunities (Oviatt & McDougall, 2005), and competitive resources (Zahra, 2021) dynamically create opportunities for entrepreneurial vision and contribute to regional development (Fernhaber *et al.*, 2008; Ahmed & Brennan, 2021). Considering these aspects, Figure 1 presents the dimensions of international entrepreneurship and the subcategories identified in the tourist destination of Porto de Galinhas.

**Figure 1** - Dimensions of the IS in Porto de Galinhas

Source: Prepared by the author with support from ATLAS.ti (2025).

The interviewees indicate that tourism activities in Porto de Galinhas experience cycles of instability due to external environmental factors. In line with this understanding, the Director of Agency – B reports that:

[...] Latin America always carries significant economic risk, right? That was one risk. Another is economic insecurity in Latin American countries. A second major risk is financing these trips. We have never managed to get international companies to pre-pay for our trips. So, the greatest risk is always economic and financial, right?

Supporting this perspective, Ipsmiller and Dikova (2021) explain that business motivation is linked to the pursuit of results and strategies to overcome market barriers. The authors also emphasize that the subcategory of business motivation encourages entrepreneurs to explore new markets, acquire strategic assets, and improve resource efficiency. Mansour *et al.* (2019) add that political crises and environmental disasters can also stimulate the internationalization of productive activities and foster the development of new businesses.

The reports from Porto de Galinhas entrepreneurs further reveal that attitudes toward risk are closely associated with companies' capacity for innovation. The Director of the Hotel Association Entity-C states that:

"[...] The budget for promoting Porto de Galinhas comes from businesspeople; there is no public funding. The destination brand is from the Convention Bureau. The destination website is from the Convention Bureau. Instagram is from the Convention Bureau. All promotion of the destination is corporate, targeting prospective international tourism clients [...]."

Private institutions are therefore motivated to enhance profitability through innovative strategies and resources. According to Etemad (2021), through corporate risk, entrepreneurs acquire valuable knowledge that enables them to handle crises and prepare for the future. Child *et al.* (2022) further emphasize that innovative management practices reduce organizational vulnerability and mitigate unfamiliarity with the internationalization process. From another perspective, the General Manager of Hotel-A reports that:

[...] I don't think there's any way to operate a hotel industry today without technology, especially in resorts, right? We're not just talking about basic technology, right? About basic systems, like PMS



or timekeeping. We're talking about monitoring reviews, market trends, and pricing daily. Yeah, I can't even imagine what it's like to work without technology these days, right? [...]

For Zahra (2022), technology accelerates organizational processes, improves products and takes entrepreneurial strategies to international levels. The author explains that access to technology creates a competitive advantage and enhances business productivity.

This research shows that the process of internationalization of tourism activities occurs primarily through the arrival of international travelers seeking local attractions. The process is shaped by the unique identity of the territory, driven by marketing, natural, urban, and cultural resources, and memorable tourist experiences that are significant for business internationalization.

In tourism, theoretical debates on the dimensions of IE and its subcategories are influenced by the region's natural, cultural, and urban contexts. The Marketing Manager of the Digital Platform-A confirms that:

[...] I think there is also a cultural dimension. The culture of Porto de Galinhas and Pernambuco is very distinctive. So, people talk a lot about it and are interested in getting to know it, beyond the beaches and hotels that I mentioned. Sometimes the client arrives without knowing, but I think there is also this other side, for example, the culture of the music, of the bands that came from the region, or from the state, right? So, I think that's it, the culture helps to positively impact the promotion of the destination as well [...].

It is worth adding that international tourists enter the domestic market in search of unique characteristics belonging to the tourist destination (Mira & Breda, 2021). In this sense, the editor of Digital Platform-B explains the reasons why international tourists come to Porto de Galinhas, namely: “[...] Culture, right? Music, dance, yes, history, but mainly, this issue of beaches and heat. Because I think that is what is most different about the destination, and also because this is possible practically all year round, right? Unlike the southern coast, for example, right [...]?”

Therefore, it is plausible to justify that the business internationalization of the tourism industry can occur within the domestic market through the consumption of local tourism resources. In this context, the search for aspects intrinsic to the territory transforms the destination into a tourist attraction (Mira & Breda, 2021) and/or a source of memorable experiences (Pine II & Gilmore, 1998; Gosling et al., 2016).

Given this fact, it is pertinent to highlight that as stakeholders understand the relationship between international opportunities and the endogenous characteristics of the location, business proactivity, creativity, and the entrepreneurial capacity to enhance tourism resources emerge. This observation is illustrated by the report of the interviewee from Digital Platform-B:

[...] And this website, our business, the first motivation we had was the lack of information. The lack of information about everything there is to see here. Not just the pools and the beaches. That's what started the website, the creation of this social network, and everything with a space for information. We also operate as a virtual, online travel agency, but the website began because we identified a lack of information, innovative information that is constant and updated regularly, not only for travelers passing through [...].

Etemad (2021) explains that corporate internationalization is shaped by the global mindset of stakeholders, as it allows individuals to pursue specific international opportunities (Tabares, 2021). The researcher emphasizes that corporate internationalization efforts rely on factors including organizational learning, specialized marketing capabilities, and unique business resources. These arguments are exposed in the speech of the representative of Digital Platform-B:

[...] Most companies communicate only in Portuguese, but most foreign visitors speak Spanish. So, we specialized: we professionalized our platform, giving each audience its own space. Foreign visitors to Porto de Galinhas have a website and social network content in Spanish. There is no mixing or confusion of languages. We focus both on foreigners and, of course, on Brazilian clients, right? [...].

In the corporate scenario, adaptations to the global market occur across multiple dimensions. Zucchella (2021) emphasizes that managers and companies must adjust strategies and organizational environments to meet international demands. Therefore, it is crucial to understand cultural, legal, and administrative differences (Crick & Crick, 2022). The Commercial Director of Hotel-E highlighted this reality:

[...] Yes, as far as I can remember, there was only one regulatory framework when we received a charter from England. These charters were the only ones. They had a health department that inspected the hotels before opening. So, they went to the pool, checked if there were depth signs, notices in English. Yes, they went into the kitchen, the warehouse, and measured the temperature at which the food was being cooked. They acted as a health surveillance, right? They had a health surveillance department within the company [...].

Furthermore, in tourism, the sale of products and services is influenced by geographic location as well as cultural and natural resources (Mira & Breda, 2021). The Food and Beverage Manager of Hotel-C noted:

[...] We operate regionally, which attracts international tourists because they are demanding customers. They are customers who are used to high-level service. And I think they do look for regionality, but they also have their own customs, right? So, for example, some foreign guests prefer their traditional tea, such as English tea, which we provide [...].

Relationship networks are critical for the development of Porto de Galinhas. According to the Commercial Executive of travel operator A, trust among businesspeople contributes to the growth of tourism activities. The Commercial Executive of travel operator A explains that:

[...] The operator was the first company, for example, to charter aircraft exclusively to Porto de Galinhas. So, in the 1990s, what strengthened this destination was not regular flights, but rather the reliability established between these companies and hotels. The operator chartered several planes and allocated them to the destination. Since airline tickets were expensive, charter flights offered a more affordable option. These flights contributed significantly to the growth of the destination and the reliability of its brand [...].

Most interviewees emphasized that trust between companies in the destination is essential for the performance of the destination. This subcategory supports information exchange and enhances organizational strategy development (Oviatt & McDougall, 2005; Etemad, 2021). Etemad (2021) also explains that trust between relationship networks fosters knowledge sharing and encourages the creation of innovative practices.

Collaborative behavior is another key variable influencing business outcomes in the destination. This subcategory of IE impacts business performance through the connections among network actors. The Commercial Director – Hotel-E explains that:

[...] So, we host travel agents for three to four days to experience the hotels and tours firsthand. They gain personal insight into the experiences they promote to clients, take notes on each hotel, and develop a deeper understanding of the businesses. This learning experience is essential for maintaining high occupancy rates in Porto de Galinhas [...].”

Crick and Crick (2022) explain that collaborative behavior helps minimize competitive tension, reduces operating costs, and sustains positive business relationships. The expansion of such networks can also facilitate business internationalization (Zuchella, 2021). For Andersson *et al.* (2013), local networks encourage business expansion, while international networks support knowledge acquisition and entry into the global market. This is illustrated by the Partner of Travel Operator-B:

[...] If we identify a client with the potential to generate one million dollars while currently selling 200 thousand, we recognize growth opportunities. So, we organize familiarization tours (Famtours) with support from hotels and the Secretariat, bringing five to ten clients to experience Porto de Galinhas firsthand. Occasionally, we send representatives from abroad to strengthen relationships. These actions yield significant returns and stimulate business growth [...].”

Regarding competitive resources, the interviewees identified tourism resources as the main driver of sales in the global market. Pulido-Fernández *et al.* (2022) note that tourism resources support a diversity of tourism activities and contribute to product/service differentiation. Similarly, Child *et al.* (2022) explain that tangible resources can transform sectors and stimulate business diversification. This aligns with the statement of the Director of the Associative Entity Hotels-C:

[...] So, the sun-and-sea destination is the world's leading leisure destination. The sun and sea are a big draw. And since we are structured, we have beachfront hotels; most of our resorts are beachfront, following a horizontal model with large leisure areas in more paradisiacal locations, right? It is the geography of our beaches: crystal-clear waters, summer all year round. No winter period prevents sales at any time [...].”

However, according to the Partner-Commercial Director of Agency-A, these same resources can also limit the development of companies in foreign markets. The businessman describes that:

[...] Today, for example, when you look at the statistics, within the international market, which country sends the most tourists to Pernambuco and Porto de Galinhas? Argentina. Why? Because we have direct flights from Buenos Aires to Recife. That's a key factor. The passenger spends just five hours on the flight. Once here, they enjoy the sun and sea. But would they come if they had to make one or two connections to get here? Today, travelers want agility and speed to get to their destination. That's why I say: we can only grow international tourism when we have a strategy for quick, efficient access, such as direct flights [...].”

In addition, Child *et al.* (2022) emphasize that resources are also key components capable of affecting corporate expansion, limiting internationalization, and the exploration of international opportunities.

Another challenge faced by entrepreneurs in Porto de Galinhas is the shortage of qualified labor. The Partner-Commercial Director of Agency-A explains that:

[...] Have guides who speak the language. Because there is no point in receiving tourists without having qualified professionals to assist them. Right? For example, if we receive European tourists, such as Italians, we need people who speak Italian. Or at least have guides who speak English or Spanish. It is essential to have these qualified professionals to serve them [...].

For Zahra (2022), intangible resources can also act as barriers to internationalization. The author argues that social implications contribute to competitive advantages for markets with stronger legal, political, and institutional frameworks.

It is noteworthy that even though business leaders broadly agree on the importance of attracting international tourists, the Director of the Associative Entity of Hotels C highlighted:

[...] International tourists stay longer. Our goal is always to increase the length of stay. We try to avoid local tourism that lasts only two or three nights, as it results in lower profitability for the accommodation. The longer the stay, the higher the profitability of that accommodation [...].

According to Zahra (2022), well-developed economies tend to overcome international barriers by leveraging business expertise. In contrast, Stojčić et al. (2021) argue that emerging countries often struggle to realize the potential of products and to identify the most effective strategies for competing in the global market.

The interviewees also highlighted the importance of destination attractiveness for the development of tourism activities. This aligns with Mira and Brenda (2021), who argue that the promotion of a destination can foster and/or shape a distinct tourist identity.

From another perspective, a significant overlap can be observed between the subcategories of business proactivity and marketing promotion. The explanation of the Director of the Hotel Association – C is an example:

[...] International tourists will always be our focus. Of course, if we could attract Europeans and Americans, our room rate would perform better, right? Because they pay more. But since Brazil hasn't been promoting this effectively, it affects us, right? There's no image-building effort for the country like that of other Caribbean competitors. Why would we compete with the Caribbean, right? And then, speaking of Porto, we suffer because of this. Because of the lack of coordinated national institutional work. We keep trying on our own; we never stop trying. In the 30 years of the hotel association, I think we've been working internationally for about 25 years [...].

Mira and Brenda (2021) observe that marketing can transform a region into a tourist attraction, thereby enhancing entrepreneurial capacity. The authors also highlight the critical role of public agencies in developing public policies and strategic planning for destinations. However, according to the interviewees, the motivation for international entrepreneurship in Porto de Galinhas has primarily originated from the proactive local business community. In this sense, the Director of the Hotel Association – C states that:

Porto de Galinhas is a highly organized destination, with extensive business governance like this. The restaurants have their own associations, the inns have theirs, the raft operators have their own, and the buggy drivers have theirs. There is a strong sense of belonging among the business community there. It is a place where people feel like they own it. The dedication that hotels show to maintaining tourism flows here is truly remarkable [...].

Finally, it is evident that public policy aspects, such as tax incentives, urban structure, health and safety, directly affect both the presence of international travelers and the promotion of tourism activities in the global market. From the entrepreneurs' perspective, despite the presence of international entrepreneurship dimensions in local businesses, there remains limited corporate capacity to design and implement strategies capable of achieving above-average profitability compared to competitors.

## 5 CONCLUSION

Since its founding, Porto de Galinhas has attracted international tourists, primarily from Europe and Latin America. However, changes in the external environment, such as health incidents, alterations in air routes, reductions in tax incentives for new businesses, and infrastructure deficiencies, have contributed to the dispersion or replacement of the international public. These conditions have led entrepreneurs, at various times, to shift their focus from the external market to reinforcing strategies aimed at the domestic market.

The results of the research reveal the presence of key dimensions of international entrepreneurship (IE) in local corporations, including relationship networks, attitude toward international risk, capacity for innovation, exploration

of international opportunities, and competitive resources. Notably, the dimension of relationship networks is the one that most influences local organizations in their efforts to pursue international ventures.

From a theoretical perspective, this study contributes to the field of IE research by demonstrating that, in tourism, debates on the dimensions of IE and their subcategories are strongly influenced by the natural, cultural, and urban contexts of a region. As a practical contribution, this study provides valuable insights for destination managers, supporting informed decision-making to achieve strategic objectives, profitability, and overall performance.

The study also highlights challenges in attracting international tourists, including the need to cultivate a global mindset among business leaders and public officials. The data indicate that while economic activities are increasingly influenced by international opportunities through social media, deliberate actions to promote international entrepreneurship remain limited. From a public policy perspective, further research into the strategies applied within the Porto de Galinhas tourism cluster is recommended, given its economic significance. As part of the municipality of Ipojuca, Porto de Galinhas is recognized by the Ministry of Tourism (MTUR) (Brasil, 2021b) as the leading sun-and-sea destination in Pernambuco.

At the time of writing, no prior studies were identified linking the constructs of IE with tourism clusters in sun-and-sea destinations. Consequently, the findings of this study provide both original insights and relevant contributions for advancing research in this area. Future research is encouraged to explore the theoretical processes underlying the internationalization of tourism activities, examine strategies for integration into the global market, and propose a theoretical model to further analyze this case. Furthermore, the study could be replicated in another region of the country to determine which dimensions and subdimensions of IE are most evident in the analyzed destination.

Finally, it is important to highlight that Porto de Galinhas, as a tourist destination, has evolved in response to external environmental pressures. Local challenges led organizations to implement significant changes in their business models and interactions with other economic activities in the region, demonstrating the dynamic interplay between entrepreneurship and regional development.

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## Data Availability Statement

Data should be requested from the author by email at [livia.ssoares@ufpe.br](mailto:livia.ssoares@ufpe.br)