AIRLINE ROUTES AND SECOND HOME TOURISM. THE FRENCH MARKET IN THE ALGARVE

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ABSTRACT

The new routes and services provided by low cost carriers enable the emergence of new tourist destinations in Europe and the development of new market segments that value the cheap and easy air accessibilities. One of the best examples is second home tourism (normally associated with residential tourism) that grew in recent years, mainly in tourism destinations in the south of Europe and Mediterranean. One of them is the Algarve that receive nowadays new second home owners coming from several countries, mainly because of the region' great weather conditions, security and air accessibilities. France is one of the new second home market in Algarve, mainly because of the new Non-Habitual Residents (NHR) regime, that provides to new residents a very attractive tax benefits for their 10 years living in Portugal, as well as the new routes provided by low cost carriers since 2016 to eleven airports of France.

Keywords: Low Cost Carriers, Residential Tourism, Algarve, French Market.

JEL Classification: L85, L93, Z32

1. INTRODUCTION

In recent years, air transport significantly increased the number of flights, routes, destinations and passengers, heavily contributing to the process of airspace liberalisation. This process led to a shift from a management model with heavy state intervention to a competitive market model, allowing the entry of low cost carriers. These carriers have enabled consumers to enjoy a wider range of supply and low airfares (Costa & Almeida, 2018).

In Europe, this process began in 1987 in the United Kingdom and Ireland, and strong growth allowed these carriers to capture quickly a large market share (Costa & Almeida, 2018). In Portugal, low cost carriers started in 1997 at the Faro and Lisbon airports with Air Berlin and Ryanair, and, in 2011, low cost carriers transported approximately 37% of the total number of air passengers in Portugal (INAC, 2012).

Low cost carriers provides new accessibilities at a low fare across Europe, developing in the last decade new routes and frequencies from some markets to tourism destinations. This situation allowed the development of new tourism segments, like for example the second home tourism. As stated by Graham & Dennis (2010), low cost carriers provide a convenient access to second home owners, which, according to Almeida (2010), value the direct routes across the year from their country of residence to the destination where they have their second home. One of them is the French market that besides having new tax benefits for buying a second home in Portugal, have new routes and frequencies along the year to the Algarve offered by several airlines and with cheap fares.

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The main aim of this article is to analyse the dynamic of the French second home market in the Algarve, with references to the performance of Faro airport (passengers and routes) since 2006, with a deep analysis of the French routes, as well as data collected through some Associations and Real estate enterprises that work directly with French buyers.

2. AIR TRANSPORT

Tourism and air transport have a strong reciprocal and symbiotic relationship (Duval, 2013). Air transport is the main mean of transportation worldwide. In 2014, more than half of all tourists travelled to some destination by air (54%), while the rest travelled on surface transport (46%) - whether by road (39%), rail (2%) or water (5%) (UNWTO, 2015).

As stated by Almeida (2017) the "new mobility" achieved in Europe due to the development of low cost carriers is amazing and a sector like tourism knew a great increase, new demand and above all the development of new tourism destinations around the continent. Today it is easy to fly around Europe from point A to point B due to the dynamic of low cost carriers, their new routes, innovative offers with flexible and creative services.

The liberalisation of air transport in Europe twenty years ago set the stage for the development of low cost carriers' business model that rapidly spread along the Europe, offering new opportunities and challenges for destinations and related business enterprises, like the ones of the tourism sector. As stated by Castro and Fraga (2017), low cost carriers have an important role to tourism development in several countries as they attract considerable tourist flows.

Donzelli (2010) refer that low cost carriers introduced a new business model into the aviation sector, based on higher levels of operational efficiency mixed with low fares. For Siciliano and Vismara (2007) this situation led to a shift in air travel, nowadays seen as a commodity, resulting in increasing traffic.

The emergence of low cost carriers changed the way people travel and make choices (Boniface & Cooper, 2009). Clave et al. (2015) refer that the availability of low-cost routes in Europe does not appear to have limits and in the tourism sector there seems to be no doubt that both mature and emerging destinations benefit from the larger number of tourists using low-cost carriers.

For Dobruszkes (2013), low cost carriers become the main mode of travel in Europe, creating a new demand in new market segments, not served conveniently by the installed airlines. Low cost carriers intensified price competition, stimulating demand for short-haul air travel, leading to a phenomenal growth of short breaks or weekend holidays across Europe. The tourism boom originates new infrastructures and the high prices of real estate (Lei & Papatheodorou, 2010).

Besides the benefits that low cost carriers brought to regional airports that experienced a substantial increase in their traffic growth, many destinations found a new way to diversify, de-seasonalise and boost tourism product, as low cost carriers reduce seasonal fluctuations in traffic flows, making off-season travel to a region more attractive. This led to the improvement of the quality of these products and the attractiveness of a region for tourism and other industries (European Union Committee of the Regions, 2004).

One of the consequences of the development of new routes and frequencies of low cost carriers along the year is the attraction of second-home owners to mature tourism destinations, as for example Algarve located in the South of Portugal (Almeida, 2011). This is mainly due because second homeowners value point-to point travel, low fares and above all the number of frequencies along the week between their origin countries and their second home region as found in the research of Almeida (2010) regarding second home tourism in the Algarve.

3. SECOND HOME TOURISM

Cárcel (2005) emphasises that the early stages of second home initiated some centuries ago in Ancient Egypt, when prominent and rich people rested in their villas away from the routine of the urban centre. In the Hellenistic Greece, in the third and second centuries BC, the wealthy classes travelled to other locations looking for comfort, tranquillity, and leisure.

According to Müller and Hoogendoorn (2013), the first studies of second home tourism start with Ljungdahl in 1938. The author conducted an analysis of the second home market in Stockholm before World War II. However, as stated by Almeida (2010), the thematic only caught the attention of academia after the study by Coppock – "Second Homes: Curse or Blessing", in 1977.

The literature review provide us one of the first definitions that were presented by Barbier in 1969, as the accommodation belonging to a person who already has a main residence and usually resides in a city or at least away from this villa, visiting it on weekends or holiday (Almeida, 2010).

More recently, Mazón and Aledo (2005) consider second home tourism as an economic activity whose main objective is to develop urbanization, frequently in coastal areas, where retired people generally purchase accommodations. Mazón, 2006 cited by Almeida (2010), pointed out that old people usually buy or rent a residence looking for places with mild weather and a good quality of life.

Along the years, several definitions of second home tourism or residential tourism came across but none of them is consensual, as it depends on a country-specific context or even from political or sociological point of view. In this article, we use our own definition that we recreate with the fusion of Almeida (2010) and Gomes, Pinto and Almeida (2017) definition for second home tourism:

> *Property purchased as a second residence to use seasonally, for tourism, recreation, leisure or for economic purposes. Can be set in a tourism resort in plural property with complementary services and entertainment equipment or in a local accommodation registered properly in order to generate income through rent or as an investment.*

Wong and Musa (2015) refer that most retirees reside in their own countries, but some privileged few prefer to migrate and live overseas. Müller and Hall (2004) states that second home for retirement coined a new description in international human mobility and dwelling. It enables the achievement of better life quality (Balkir & Kirkulak, 2009) and the fulfilment of self-actualization need (Wong & Musa, 2014).

A study conducted by Almeida (2010) about residential tourism in the Algarve found that during the year a second home owner can travel to the destination 4,7 times, normally with another person, using in 87,5% of the cases a low cost flight as it provides a direct route from their home country. The main reasons for buying this second home in the Algarve were the climate of the region (79,4%) and the airline accessibilities with direct flights (52,9%).

As stated by Almeida (2010) some of the main reasons to buy a home abroad are the good climate of the destination; good accessibilities (land and air accessibilities); maturity of the tourism destination and their security index, as well as the level of activities, services and above all golf courses in the destination.

4. METHODOLOGY

In order to evaluate the importance of the existing airline routes from France to the Algarve and their impact in the second home market, the author analyse in deep data provided by several sources. First we analyse the growing trends in terms of movement of passengers at Faro Airport (AHETA, 2009, 2012, 2015, 2018) and the available routes to some European Markets and more deeply to France, offered along the year (November 2017 until October 2018) (ANA, 2018a, 2018b).

Second, we analyse the data related to the performance of the Algarve in terms of overnights (AHETA, 2018; Turismo de Portugal, 2018) and also some other details related to the Travel & Tourism Competitiveness Index for 2017 (World Economic Forum, 2017).

To analyse the performance of the French market the author focus the analysis in additional data provided by several Associations and Real Estate Agencies operating in Portugal.

5. CASE STUDY

5.1 The Algarve as a tourism destination

Located in the southern area of Portugal's mainland, bordering Spain on the east, Alentejo region in the north and the Atlantic Ocean on the south, Algarve is the most popular tourism destination in Portugal and famous in Europe due in particular to the "sun and beach" product. As stated by Portuguese Tourism Board (Turismo de Portugal, 2013), besides sun and beach, golf and second home tourism are also very relevant products in the Algarve.

In Portugal residential tourism only gained a relevant importance in 2007, when the Portuguese Tourism Board refer in the Strategic Tourism National Plan that Public Administration has acknowledged the importance of second home tourism to attract foreign investment, through tax incentives and visas for foreigners who buy houses in Portugal (Turismo de Portugal, 2007). Until that year the term residential tourism never appear in official documents and it was mainly related to people that have a second home (nationals or foreigners) in some tourism areas, like the Algarve, and rent their houses without the knowledge of the fiscal services. Since 2007, Portugal create the new strategic product and new legislation that allow the owners to register their second homes and rent them along the year with the payment of a tax per reservation to the fiscal services.

Ten years later and with a new strategy named Tourism 2027, Portuguese Tourism Board (Turismo de Portugal, 2017) brings to discussion new products besides the ones that were presented in 2007 (Turismo de Portugal, 2007) with some changes for the role of residential tourism. Tourism 2027 points out that Residential tourism is not anymore an isolated product, and is included in "*Living – Live in Portugal*" (Turismo de Portugal, 2017). As stated by the Portuguese Tourism Board, "Living" is an emergent active of Portugal (Turismo de Portugal, 2017).

Portugal is a country searched by international citizens to live due to the quality of life, climate, gastronomy, value for money and above all security (Turismo de Portugal, 2017), being considered by World Economic Forum (2017), the number 1 in the Travel & Tourism Competitiveness Index in the component *Safety and Security – Index of terrorism incidence.*

This leads to a growing trend for investment in real estate, from international citizens that choose Portugal to live, offering a new atmosphere to several areas of the country, as for example Algarve (Turismo de Portugal, 2017).

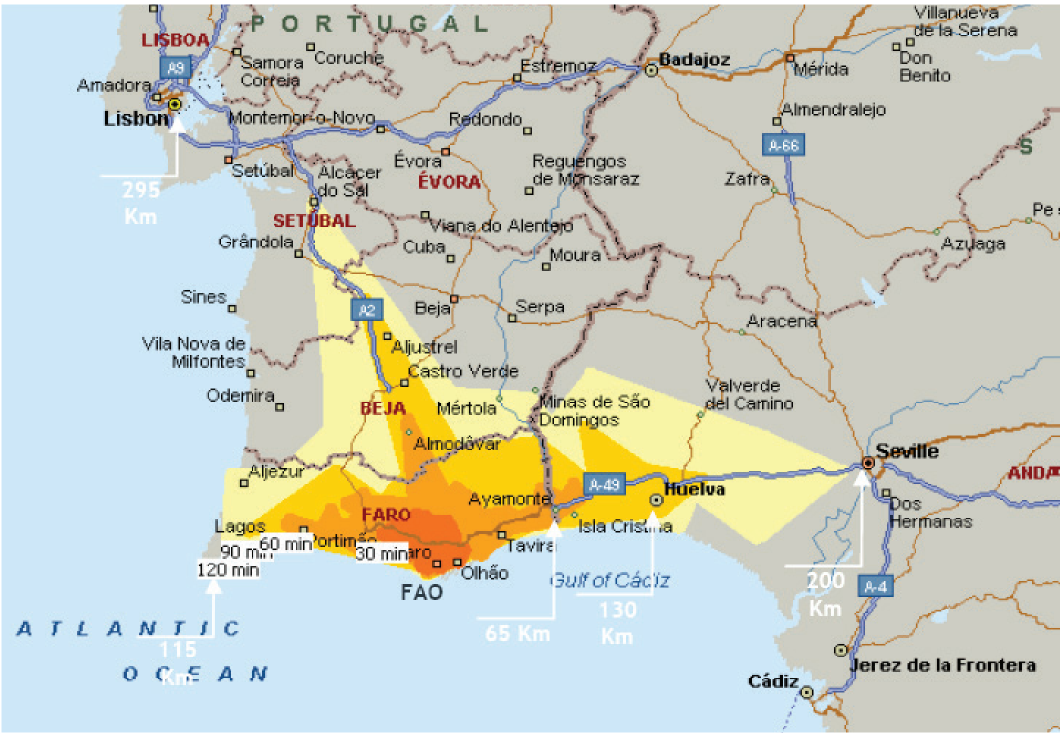
The Algarve region represents in 2017 around 20,6% of official accommodation establishments and 35,6% of the official total beds capacity in Portugal (Turismo de Portugal, 2018).

Second home tourism is particularly important because it influences not only the tourism market, but also other activity sectors such as real estate, construction, and financial services. As stated by AHETA (2018), the Algarve register in 2017 around 20 million overnights in official accommodation, around 4.3 million guests. When we add the second homes and family and friends home to this number, we reach 7.4 million guests and the equivalent of 37 million overnights. This data shows the importance of second home tourism to the region and above all for economic and sociocultural purposes, as it generates impacts in the destination and in the host community.

5.2 Faro Airport

Faro airport serve the southern region of Portugal (Algarve), with the focus on international tourism traffic. According to Fonseca (2007), this airport has a catchment area of approximately 395,000 people within 60 minutes. If we add the area of Huelva, Spain it amounts to 535,000 people. A distance up to 180 minutes this figure may reach 1,286,360 people (Figure 1).

Figure 1. Faro Airport Catchment Area

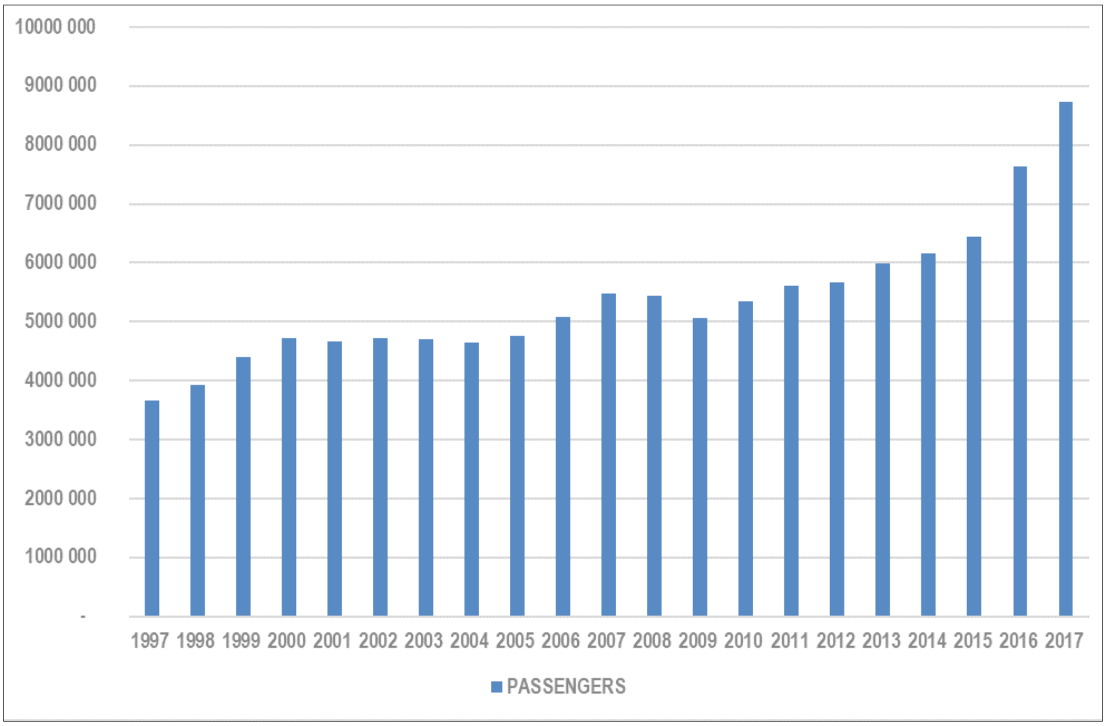


Source: ANA (2008)

Faro airport presented over the 53 years of operation, an increase in the number of passengers handled, accompanied by changes in its infrastructure in the early 70's, in the late 80's, in 2000 and more recently in 2016 and 2017. These recent changes allowed the increase of this airport capacity to nine million passengers per year. All changes that occurred in the terminal and other infrastructure allowed the airport to ensure a better level of service to airlines, passengers and other customers, enabling the development of traffic flow and consequently the tourism in the Algarve.

Since its opening, Faro airport is mainly a tourism airport that receives around 90% of incoming traffic from several countries of Central and Northern Europe with a seasonal operation. Until the mid 90's the main traffic was charter and in a huge seasonal operation between June and late September, mainly associated to the big European Tour Operators, like TUI, Thomson or Thomas Cook. From the mid 90's, and after completed the deregulation of air transport in Europe, the traffic structure changed due to start-up of low cost carriers and a decrease of the charter flights. Since 1997, trafic volume grew from 3.66 million to 8.7 million passengers in 2017 (Figure 2). Today low cost carriers represent more than 70% of the airport traffic.

Figure 2. Number of passengers at Faro Airport (1997/2017)



Source: Almeida (2010); AHETA (2012); AHETA (2015); AHETA (2018)

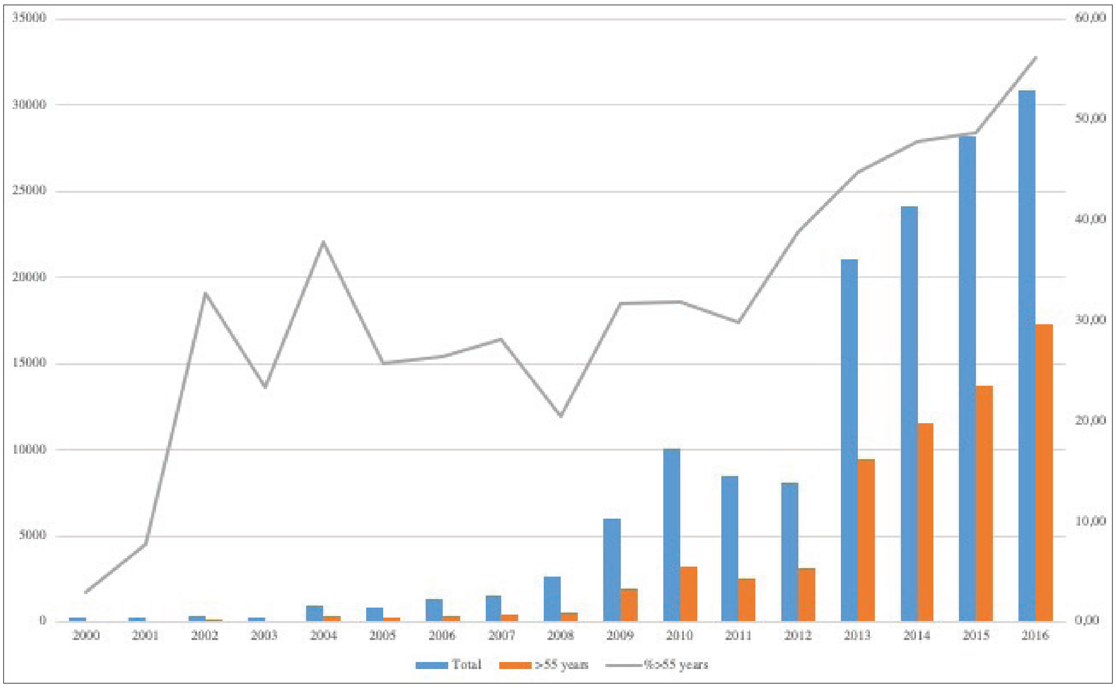
During the first decade of the 21st century, Faro airport witnessed a complete change in the predominant transport model, with a decline in charter operations and the emergence of the low cost carriers. This change took place on the supply side, i.e. essentially, airlines did little more than adapt the low cost model quickly and efficiently to the intrinsic structural characteristics of tourism in the Algarve in response to consumer demands (greater flexibility) and hence this did not result in a significant leap in the overall volume of visitors using this airport.

Consequently, a more accelerated and sustained growth take place by stimulating an increase in demand, based on a diversification of markets as well as on innovation and differentiation and by promoting the tourism products that the region and its economic agents have to offer.

The inauguration in March 2010 of the first operational base of Ryanair at Faro, create an enormous challenge for the mobilising capacity of regional economic agents (Almeida, 2011). It provides new routes to the Algarve, new frequencies along the day, new investment in services at the Airport and in the region due to the higher number of passengers (e.g. rent a car, transfer enterprises) and above all the creation of an outgoing market that was not so frequent in the Algarve.

By the end of 2010 Ryanair reach the first position in passengers handled at Faro Airport with a growth of 123,5% compared to the previous year (1.392.702 passengers). By the same period, Easyjet dropped for the second place, with less 1,9% passengers than in the previous year (1.148.730 passengers). The growing trend of Ryanair is evident, and in 2016, Ryanair reach around 28,8% and Easyjet around 19,7% of the total amount of passengers at Faro Airport. Together these two airlines transport only to Faro Airport in 2016 around 48,5% of the total traffic (Figure 3).

Figure 3. Number of passengers (%) at Faro Airport – Ryanair and Easyjet (2005/2016)



Source: ANA (2016)

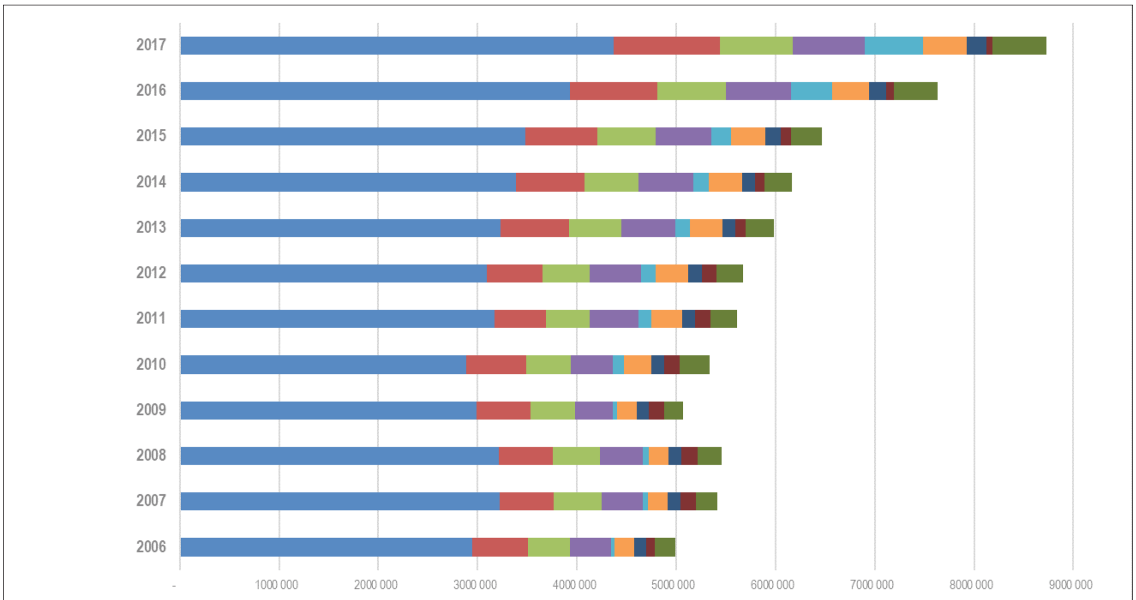
The operation of low cost carriers at Faro Airport led to the provision of new routes and flights to new regions of Europe throughout the year, allowing a significant improvement in the accessibility and development of new tourism market segments, as for example the residential tourism. This market segment is associated with people that travel abroad all over the year to stay in their second home. These clients appreciate the accessibility to the destination provided mainly by low cost airlines (Almeida, 2010).

4.3 The French market in the Algarve

For many years the Algarve receive mainly tourists coming from UK, Germany, The Netherlands and Ireland, which represent together for several years more than 80% of the total traffic at Faro Airport.

Data provided by AHETA (2009, 2012, 2015 and 2018) show that this trend is not the same in 2017 for the eight main markets, as France gained some advantage over the Portuguese market (Figure 4).

Figure 4. Number of passenger per market at Faro Airport (2006/2017)



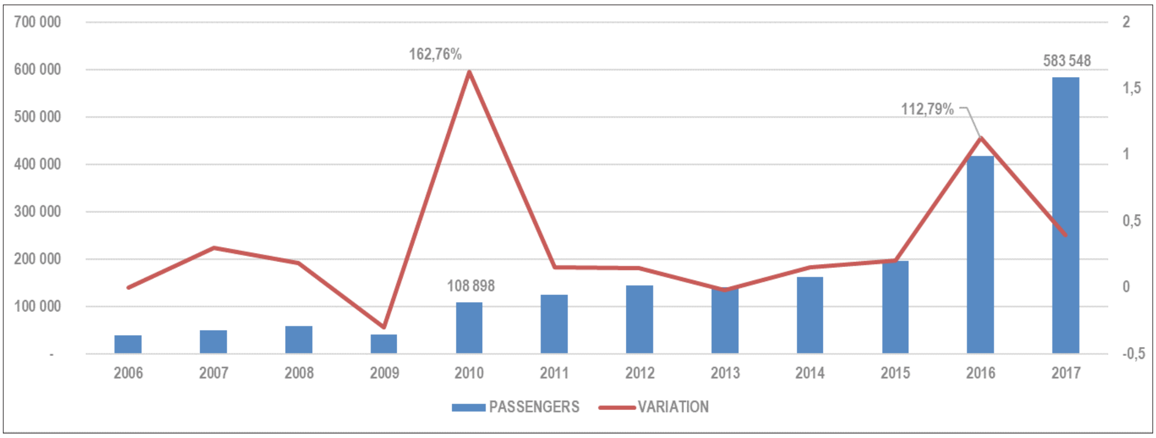
	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
UK	2946 817	3225 397	3216 847	2992 389	2885 167	3169 056	3094 597	3233 002	3388 578	3482 533	3930 593	4368 771
Germany	563 431	542 226	539 637	537 425	602 921	518 272	562 600	688 791	687 716	721 261	881 889	1073 763
Ireland	419 564	483 408	474 980	455 373	448 176	440 342	468 793	523 695	546 302	587 702	684 389	728 995
The Netherlands	412 167	416 066	435 763	378 893	426 851	492 643	520 860	548 117	545 996	563 386	660 298	727 749
France	38 509	50 134	59 315	41 444	108 898	125 756	144 211	141 278	162 695	196 330	417 762	583 548
Portugal	196 636	192 753	193 382	194 766	281 918	310 974	334 213	329 538	331 439	348 736	369 700	439 973
Belgium	118 266	130 756	133 944	127 626	125 846	128 826	136 535	129 657	131 506	150 151	171 997	198 746
Spain	85 859	156 226	162 332	154 304	154 732	163 582	147 683	100 959	92 694	105 539	75 503	66 577
Others	210 579	213 526	238 706	190 484	302 457	266 232	263 157	286 431	280 247	308 077	438 843	539 010

Source: AHETA (2009); AHETA (2012); AHETA (2015); AHETA (2018)

Figures from AHETA (2018) show a moderate growing trend of the French market between 2006 and 2008, with a decrease in 2009 mainly due to the economic downturn. In 2010 it starts to grow again, finishing 2017 with 583.548 passengers (Figure 5).

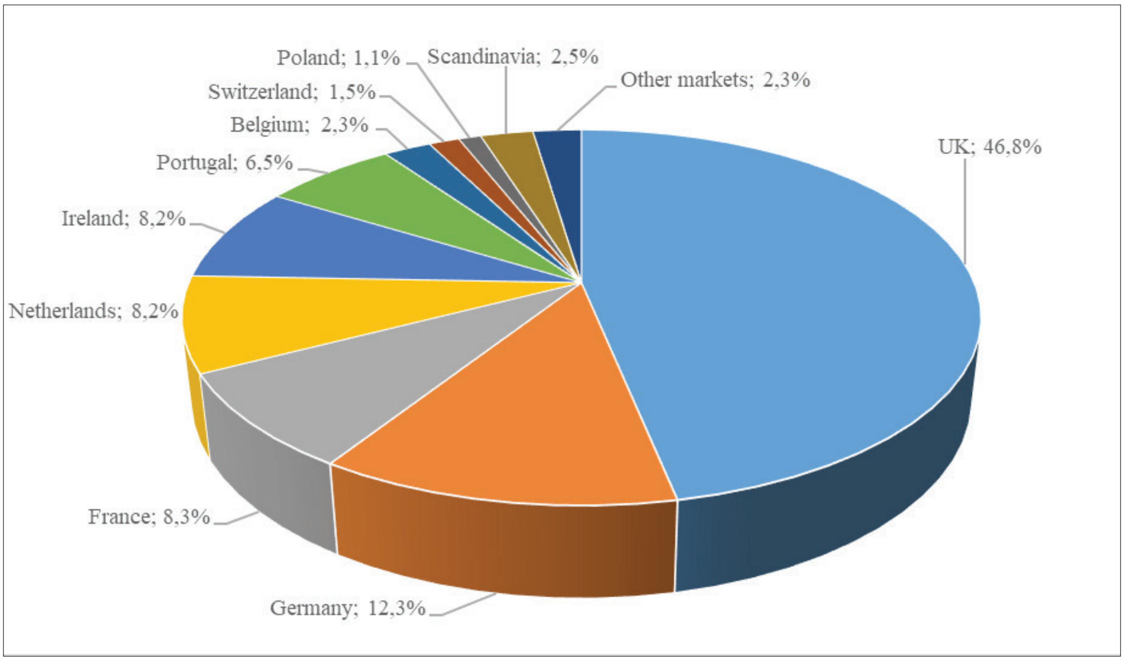
Latest data provided by ANA (2018a, 2018b), show that French market is between *Winter IATA* 2017/2018 and *Summer IATA* 2018, the third market in terms of frequencies per week (8,3% of the total), beating the Irish and Dutch market (Figure 6).

Figure 5. Number of passengers and Annual variation for French market at Faro Airport (2006/2017)



Source: AHETA (2009); AHETA (2012); AHETA (2015); AHETA (2018)

Figure 6. Total number of frequencies (%) per market at Faro Airport (Winter IATA 2017/2018 – Summer IATA 2018)



Source: ANA (2018a); ANA (2018b)

The opening of new routes from eleven French airports to Faro Airport (Bordeaux; Lille, Lesquin; Lyon, St Exupery; Marseille; Nantes; Nice; Paris, Beauvais-Tille; Paris, Charles de Gaulle; Paris, Orly; Strasbourg and Toulouse, Blagnac) can explain the growing trends of the French market in the Algarve mainly since 2016. Besides that Portugal create the Non-Habitual Residents (NHR) regime for international citizens in 2016 that provides to new residents a very attractive tax benefits for their first 10 years living in Portugal. One of the markets that were more attracted to this new regime were the French citizens, that are investing in real estate in Portugal. This situation besides being very attractive for these citizens brought new investments to the Algarve, not only in terms of second home market but also in the opening of new enterprises (e.g. Real Estate enterprises specialized in French market), creating a new dynamic in the region.

According to INE (2018), between 2012 and 2017, the French citizens bought around 19.000 houses in Portugal, in part Portuguese emigrants and their descendants that live in France. Only in 2017, French citizens bought 4.929 houses in Portugal, mainly old houses to rebuild located in historical areas, being the foreign market with more purchases, followed by UK (2.597 houses) and Switzerland (1.320 houses). In total the French market invest around 546 million euros in 2017.

APPII (Portuguese Association of developers and real estate investors) states that one of the main secrets for the success of the French market in Portugal is the huge presence in the Real Estate Fairs in France in the last years. This strategy along with the information that appear daily in the website of Maison au Portugal brings new investments to the country (Barros, 2015).

According to Françoise Conestabile, the President of the Portuguese delegation of the Association Union des Français de l'etranger (UFE), this association receive everyday several messages from French people asking details and information about Portugal. This Association have branches in Portugal, located in Caldas da Rainha, Lisbon and Portimão that organize several activities for seniors and retired French that desire to discover the country (Lusa, 2015).

One of the main Real estate Agencies operating in Portugal, *Century 21*, states that in 2014 they sold in Portugal 1545 houses for the international market, being the French market the main buyer with 47% of the total transactions, followed by UK (28%) and Belgium (16%) (Barros, 2015). In 2017 the French market represent to *Century 21* more than 50% of the total amount of international purchases, followed by Brazilians (16%) and Chinese (13,2%) (Lusa, 2018a).

AlgarveProperty.com (2015) refer that French buyers belong to several social classes (medium, high-medium and high classes), want to invest in different types of properties (apartments or villas) and are attracted by the good atmosphere of the country, the food, the residents, lifestyle and above all the good climate.

According to Hugo Nascimento (Ambitur, 2018), a product manager of Algarve Tourism Association, the French market is one of the fastest growing markets in the Algarve. In 2017, the French market grew around 25% over the previous year. In the first semester of 2018, the French tourist grew around 17% over the previous year.

Hugo Nascimento refer that for many years the Algarve only receive flights from Paris and in 2018 the region is connected to the main airports of France, which allow the development of the market (Ambitur, 2018). Data collected though Faro Airport allow us to understand that from November 2017 to March 2018, Faro Airport received the flights from nine airports of France. This number increased during the period of April to October 2018 to eleven airports. In this period of analysis the months with more frequencies per week from French routes were the month of August (75) and July (74). The months that registered less frequencies per week were January and February (19).

Table 1. Number of frequencies per week in French routes to Faro Airport (Nov 2017 - Oct 2018)

ROUTE	NUMBER OF FREQUENCIES PER ROUTE/PER WEEK											
	2017		2018									
	NOV	DEC	JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN	JUL	AUG	SET	OCT
Bordeaux	0	0	0	0	0	2	5	6	6	6	4	5
Lille, Lesquin	2	2	2	2	3	4	5	5	5	6	5	4
Lyon, St Exupery	3	2	2	2	3	6	7	6	8	8	6	6
Marselha	0	0	0	0	1	3	4	4	5	5	5	3
Nantes	1	1	1	1	2	5	7	7	8	8	7	6
Nice	2	2	2	2	3	3	3	3	3	4	3	3
Paris, Beauvais-Tille	3	2	2	2	3	4	5	4	5	4	4	5
Paris, Charles de Gaulle	3	4	3	3	4	3	4	4	5	4	4	4
Paris, Orly	6	5	5	5	8	22	21	21	26	27	21	20
Estrasburgo	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	1	0
Toulouse, Blagnac	2	2	2	2	3	4	3	3	3	3	3	3
TOTAL	**22**	**20**	**19**	**19**	**30**	**56**	**65**	**64**	**74**	**75**	**63**	**59**

Source: ANA (2018a); ANA (2018b)

The enterprise L'Hirondelle, a regional migration agency in France, is one of the responsible for the growing numbers of French market in Portugal. The objective of this enterprise is to capture the attention and interest of French seniors and retirees through Portugal as an extended vacation destination or even a definitive installation. According to L'Hirondelle' President, until the end 2014 around 200 thousand retired French people lived abroad, and in 2015 some 800 thousand new French people desire to do the same, being the Algarve one of the main destinations. According to Afonso (2015), the French market is not exclusively composed by seniors or retired people, but also by entrepreneurs, investors and Portugal' lovers that want to invest in the country, to create their own enterprise and enjoy a calm lifestyle in a region like Algarve.

Recently the Groupe Terrésens, a french specialist in tourism real estate market, announced the construction of a new real estate development – *Alto Lake Side*, located in the Alvor village, near a golf course, with the focus on the high level construction and 148 luxury T1 to T3 apartments (Idealista, 2018).

France is in 2018 the number one in terms of housing market in the Algarve. In the last couple of years, the Algarve registered also a growing number of new Real Estate agencies mainly focus in French market, and normally opened by French people that know the habits and customs of their home country fellows.

6. CONCLUSION

The growing number of low cost carriers operating across Europe brought a new dynamic to several tourism destinations, which besides new air accessibilities know also new developments in terms of tourism segments. Residential tourism is one of the tourism segments that developed the most. Residential tourists prefer direct flights along the year from their home country to the destination where they have bought their second home.

In the Algarve new routes from French airports allow the growing trend of this market in the region, mainly since 2016, when Portugal create a new legislation that allows international citizens to benefit from a very attractive tax for their first 10 years living in Portugal, being one of them the French citizens. These two factors allow not only the growing number of passengers from France to the Algarve but also a record number of second home purchases in 2016 and 2017, making France the main foreign market in real estate sector in Algarve.

This trend allow us to understand the importance of the air accessibilities provided by low cost carriers to the development of the second home market. According to Almeida (2010), this is one of the main motivations to buy a second home abroad as low cost carriers besides having direct flights along the year offer cheap fares, followed by the good climate, security of the country, quality of life and above all the maturity of the region in terms of infrastructures and services. The air accessibility brought by low cost carriers in Europe is changing countries, regions and tourism destinations across the continent.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This paper is financed by National Funds provided by FCT- Foundation for Science and Technology through project UID/SOC/04020/2013.

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