



# Shipwreck Tourism in João Pessoa: An opportunity based on the history of the Steamship Alice.

André Luiz Souza Nascimento<sup>a</sup>  
Daiko Lima e Silva<sup>b</sup>

**ABSTRACT:** In tourism research, items such as beaches, gastronomy, infrastructure, and receptivity are evaluated and, in this context, shipwreck tourism is little explored or known about by tourists and the local population. Yet this form of tourism can provide an opportunity. This study aims to evaluate the opportunity of shipwreck tourism around the wreck of the steamship Alice and specifically, to analyze the historical process of formation and appropriation of this wreck as a tourism attraction. This is a quantitative and qualitative study, with an exploratory and descriptive approach. It is organized into two parts, one theoretical and the other reporting the results of field research. The result consists of historical data on the sinking of the steamship Alice, and data obtained in the field research with tourists. It was seen the city of João Pessoa (PB) has important potential for the development of shipwreck tourism, due to its large number of shipwrecks, with the locations of approximately fifty-six wrecks currently mapped, and also due to the interest of tourists in this form of tourism. It was verified that Shipwreck Tourism provides an opportunity for knowledge, innovation, and economic benefits.

**Keywords:** Tourism;  
Shipwreck;  
João Pessoa - PB;  
Steamship Alice.

## Info do artigo:

Aceito 06/Set/2022  
Publicado 23/Fev/2023

<sup>a</sup>Undergraduate of Accounting Sciences at Faculdades Integradas do Brasil—UNIFUTURO  
sn.andreluiz@gmail.com

<sup>b</sup>Master Degree in Administration at Universidade do Estado de Santa Catarina

DOI: [10.14210/at.v7i3.19295](https://doi.org/10.14210/at.v7i3.19295)

©2023 autores. Publicado por Univali  
Esse artigo é de livre acesso sob a licença





## INTRODUCTION

A survey conducted in 2020 by the Institute for Planning, Statistics, and Development of Paraíba found that for 68.86% of tourists, their expectations were met when visiting Paraíba. The research also found that 29.09% of tourists' expectations were exceeded (SECON/JP, 2020). The study evaluated items such as beaches, gastronomy, infrastructure, and receptivity and, in this context, it was seen that the surveys followed a traditional format, in which new tourism opportunities are not considered. One such opportunity is shipwreck tourism, which is little explored or known by tourists and the local population.

Considering there has been practically no research about shipwreck tourism on the coast of Paraíba, this study investigates, in the city of João Pessoa, the tourist potential of this activity based on the wreck of the steamship Alice, which sank on August 19th, 1899, 3.5 miles from Bessa beach, her bow pointing landward. Having gained a historical understanding of this wreck, this work evaluates the opportunity to develop shipwreck tourism on the coast of the State of Paraíba, specifically on the coast of the city of João Pessoa, the state capital.

The wreck of the steamship Alice is considered by divers as a good model for evaluating the potential of the shipwreck tourism, due to its location, depth, and state of conservation. These attributes make it ideal for divers to explore the wreck and the marine life on and around it. The aims of this study, therefore, are to evaluate the opportunity for shipwreck tourism around the steamship Alice, and specifically, to analyze the historical process of formation and appropriation of the wreck for shipwreck tourism.

## DEVELOPMENT

A large number of shipwrecks have occurred off the coast of Paraíba. It is a region rich in history, and the scene of many battles between the Portuguese, Dutch, and Spanish (Cunha, 2017). Founded in 1585, the capital of the captaincy of Paraíba was in a strategic position, on the trade routes to Europe. In the early years, with shipping being the main means of transport at the time, pau-brasil wood, a product of high economic value, was transported from Brazil to Portugal. This was soon followed by sugar, tobacco, and other items.

The first mode of transport, and the one best suited the Brazilian economy during colonial times, was sailing vessels, which were fragile and precarious. But these were the only means of communication with the outside world overseas (Austregésilo, 1950). They had a short lifespan, and shipwrecks were frequent,

as the boats succumbed to all kinds of accidents.

Over time, new types of vessel were developed; the steamship era arrived, with the steamship Alice which, without documented evidence, was launched to the sea under the name of Mariana on October 10, 1866, by the firm Francisco Gustavo de Oliveira Roxo e João Domingos de Oliveira. On March 30, 1869, the imperial prince Gastão de Orleans (Count of Eu) embarked on the steamship to take up his position as Commander-in-Chief of the Brazilian armed forces (Carvalho, sd). The events that culminated in the sinking of the steamship Alice were, according to Carvalho (sd), as follows:

"On June 25, 1899, with 840 tons, the steamship Alice left the port of Recife/PE, bound for Mossoró, in Rio Grande do Norte, where it was loaded with salt destined for the Salinas company, based in Rio de Janeiro. On the way to the capital, it stopped in Paraíba where it received two thousand sacks of cotton and, at the end of August 19, it left the port of Paraíba heading south. Soon after crossing the bar, the steamship began to run out of water and the efforts, commanded by the captain Mr. Francelino Duarte, had no effect. Faced with the impossibility of depleting the water, which was entering in great proportion, the order was given to turn around. The intention was to return to the port and, if this was not possible, to imbibe the steamship on the beach. However, there was no more time for Alice. About 4 miles south of the bar, 3.5 miles from Bessa beach in João Pessoa, Alice was sinking with her bow facing the land".

"When there was no more hope of saving the ship, the captain and crew moved to the boats and reached the port of Cabedelo/PB safely in the middle of the 20th day. The ship's hull settled to the bottom at a depth of 14 meters, with only the masts and spars out of the water. In this situation, the steamship Alice, is the closest ship to the Bessa beach, in João Pessoa".

"The cargo ship is lying on the bottom on the starboard side, only the bow and stern keep some integrity, and the rest of the ship is dismantled. The bow of the Alice is bowed over, and within a few meters are two anchors of the Admiralty type, a large winch, four davits, halyards, and mooring heads".

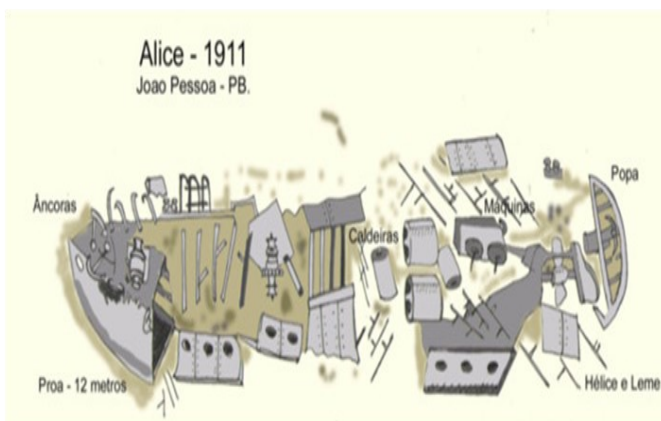
"Behind the bow, the ship is damaged, presenting a side still with bollards and wall, part of the opposite side with its portholes; in the middle of the ship can be seen the cover name and a large winch of an unusual style, perhaps it is the machinery of a crane. In a straight line from the ship are clustered two cylindrical boilers and their condensing chambers, one in front and one behind the boilers, where the ship's machinery is also located. This appears to be a Double Expansion Engine (a compound steam engine unit, it is a type of steam engine in which the steam is expanded in two or more stages), where the two large cylinders and pistons are visible".

Photograph 1 – Bow and anchor of the steamship Alice



Source: Maurício de Carvalho - [www.naufragiosdobrasil.com.br](http://www.naufragiosdobrasil.com.br)

Figure 1 – Drawing of the wreck distribution of the steamship Alice



Source: Maurício Carvalho - [www.naufragiosdobrasil.com.br](http://www.naufragiosdobrasil.com.br)

Photograph 2- Machine enclosures



Source: Maurício Carvalho - [www.naufragiosdobrasil.com.br](http://www.naufragiosdobrasil.com.br)

“From the boilers, flanked by parts of the hull, can be seen gears and the shaft that follows the propeller bow. At the Stern, we find the propeller, large and with

screw-on blades, the rudder, and its steering wheel. Showing that the stern was quite designed, behind the rudder we still find a superstructure that should support the stern deck, in it, there are mooring bollards and the rudder wheel”.

Figure 2 shows the location of the wreck of the steamship Alice and other shipwrecks within the proposed APA (Environmental Protection Area) Naufrágio Queimado.

Humans are not static, but are constantly on the move, seeking to discover new cultures, new places for leisure, and new experiences, and it is in this movement, prompted by various motives, that tourist activity occurs. In other words, tourism is a phenomenon that occurs when one or more individuals move to one or more locations other than their usual place residence, for a period of more than 24 hours and less than 180 days, without participating in the labor and capital markets of the places visited (WTO, 1995). According to Beni (2004), tourism today is defined as the science of expressing the global, competitive man, who seeks to transcend towards a new vision of universal values.

Tourism is an activity that leads to the movement of thousands of travelers in all parts of the world, boosting the economy and the appreciation of culture in the most diverse spaces, whether local or regional. It is a phenomenon that has grown over time, through the modernization process and new technologies, bringing information in real time, leading more and more people to search for new experiences, different leisure activities, an escape from the hectic routine, or simply moments of joy and pleasure. Tourists seek to take advantage of their free time, through long holidays or vacations in destinations that offer new possibilities for leisure activities.

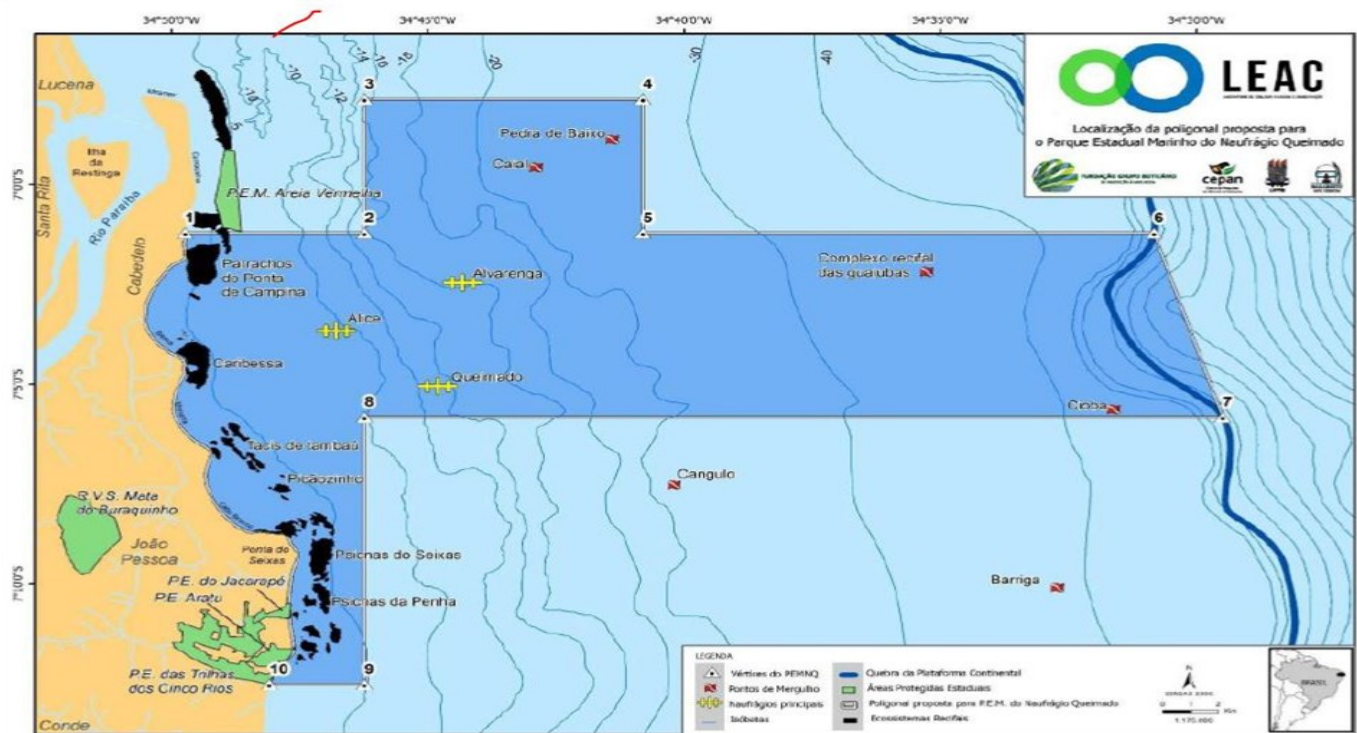
One tourist activity that is still rare in Brazil is shipwreck tourism. It is also a form of tourism that has been little studied by scholars and tourism organizations. This is seen in the scant material available on the subject, with almost all the articles and published materials in this subject area being about diving in general, and not specifically shipwreck diving. This work, therefore, seeks to develop a concept of wreck tourism in the following terms:

“Shipwreck tourism is diving activity, with or without equipment, performed on vessels sunk accidentally or intentionally, and that has tourism potential due to characteristics of the vessel, its location, and its influence on the surrounding marine life”.

### Opportunity and potential of shipwreck tourism

In 1995, for the first time in Brazil, a database of shipwrecks of the Brazilian coast was created by wreck diving instructor Maurício Carvalho, and Carlos Arruda, a systems analyst. The database was made available to

Figure 2 – Map showing the location of the wreck steamship Alice as part of the APA.



Source: Sudema, 2018.

all interested divers. Other researchers had already collected data on shipwrecks, but these data were not made publicly available, and ended up being lost when the researchers left the work. To eliminate this problem, a system was created that was open to all interested parties, to which various researchers could contribute information, increasing everyone's knowledge and rescuing an important part of the naval history of Brazil (CARVALHO, 2000).

The initial information that was fed into the SINAU (Wreck Information System) program was provided through the work of researcher Maurício Carvalho, and was made widely available through the Wreck Information System (CARVALHO, 2000). This information can now be used to search for new and unexplored diving points, add new shipwrecks and/or add historical and technical data about existing wrecks, and perform extensive research, cross-referencing the registered information (França, Lima, & Mariano, 2021). In this context, reflections are stimulated by the perspectives on the subject, which is analyzed based on the reality and potential of this activity in the region of João Pessoa, and especially, on the transformation of a particular marine area within the APA Naufrágio Queimado (Figure 2).

The territory in question highlights the significant potential for shipwreck tourism on the coast of Paraíba. It is a region with a rich history, and a large number of shipwrecks, as it was the scene of many naval battles

between the Portuguese, Dutch, and Spanish (Cunha, 2017).

Given that the research on shipwreck tourism is still incipient, some reflections on this practice are offered here, focusing on the specific area studied. We consider the steamship Alice as an opportunity for the development of shipwreck tourism. After all, Paraíba is one of the Brazilian states with the largest number of shipwrecks, and it is thought that shipwreck diving is an activity with good potential for promoting local development and generating revenue.

## METHODOLOGICAL PROCEDURES

The work was organized in two parts, beginning with bibliographic and document research of sources such as the internet and periodicals about tourism, shipwrecks, and diving activity. Next, field research was carried out, collecting data through questionnaires applied online (Google Forms).

The theoretical survey used the keywords shipwreck tourism, searching on the databases Scopus, Scielo, and EBSCO. Next, open searches were carried out in Google Scholar, using the same search terms, aiming to broaden the results, since the initial searches yielded few results, evidencing the scarcity of studies on the topic. The searches were then further expanded, accessing specialized journals in the area, available on

the Qualis Capes platform.

Research was also carried out on documents such as books, e-books, websites, and other data sources, to broaden the basis of the study on the sinking of the steamship Alice, identifying how it had sunk, its location, its state of conservation, its potential for leisure and tourism, and its preservation as a part of the cultural heritage.

The field research involved collecting data through questionnaires. The questionnaire contained 13 questions about various aspects related to shipwreck tourism, such as: Have you heard of the term shipwreck tourism? Are you aware of any shipwrecks along the Paraíba coast? There have been several shipwrecks off the Paraíba coast, one of which was the steamship Alice; have you heard of it? Do you consider shipwreck tourism to be a potential tourist activity? These and other questions were asked, in order to understand the tourists' perspective of the theme.

The data analysis was carried out in a predominantly quantitative way. Qualitative analyses were also used to evaluate the respondents' willingness to practice shipwreck tourism. The research findings are therefore reported in descriptive form.

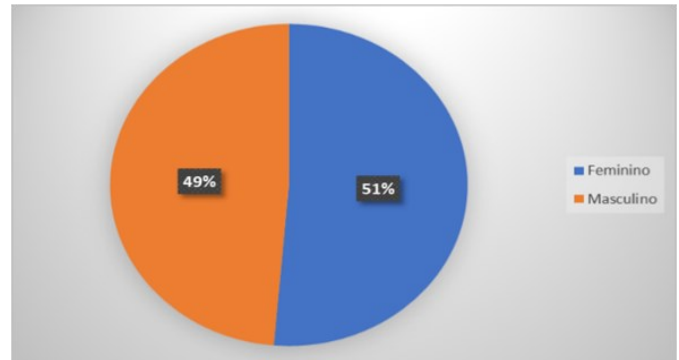
The results of the theoretical searches, together with the results of the questionnaire applied in the field research, are presented below.

## ANALYSIS OF RESULTS

This research discusses a theme that has been little studied - shipwreck tourism, filling a significant gap in publications about tourism, whether for managers, tourists, or even for the host communities that receive these tourists. The steamship Alice was evaluated as an opportunity for the development of shipwreck tourism in João Pessoa, through questionnaires applied to a total of 73 tourists, considered a significant sample.

Initially, we attempted to identify the age range of the respondents, which was broad, with respondents aged from 14 to 53 years old. This demonstrates that there is interest in the activity among people of different ages. The predominant age range, however, was 27 to 40 years old, representing approximately 66% of the respondents. The ages with the highest number of answers were 27 (eight people), 32 (seven people), 35 (five people) and 38 (five people). Thus, it can be affirmed that although the activity has the potential to be enjoyed by different publics. But for the initial development of this form of tourism, it is recommended focusing on a target public of people aged between 27 and 40 years old.

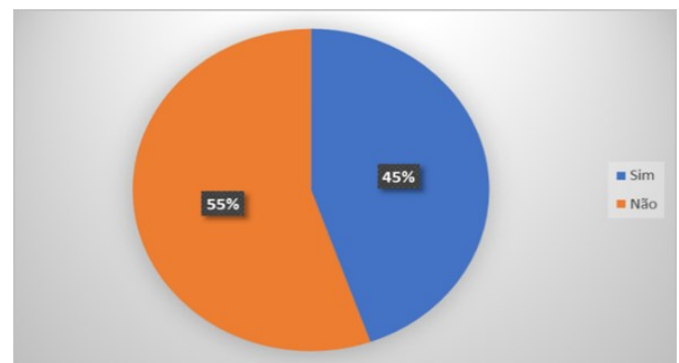
Figure 03 – Breakdown of respondents by sex. Feminino-Female and Masculino-Male



Source: Elaborated by the authors 2022

Next, we attempted to find out the respondents' sex. We found a balanced division of the sexes, though with slightly more women (51%), as shown in figure 03.

Figure 04 – Have you heard of the term "shipwreck tourism"? Sim-Yes and Não-No

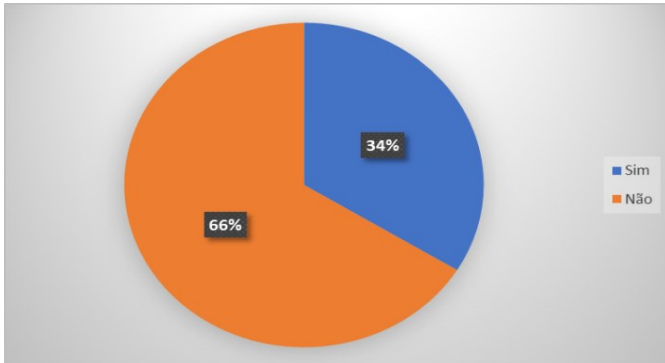


Source: Elaborated by the authors 2022

We then investigated whether the interviewees had heard of the term Wreck Tourism. 55% of the respondents said yes, they had, while 45% said no, they had not.

However, although 55% of the interviewees said they had heard of the term shipwreck tourism, only 34% said they knew how it is actually carried out. The majority 66%, did not know how shipwreck tourism is carried out, demonstrating that there is still much to be done to develop this activity.

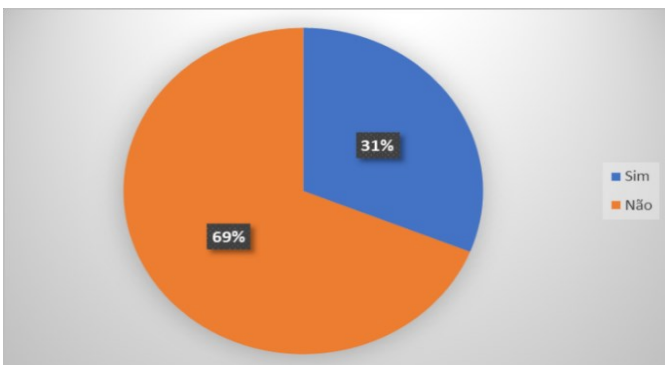
Figure 05 – Do you know how shipwreck tourism is carried out? Sim-Yes and Não-No



Source: Elaborated by the authors 2022

The research showed that shipwreck tourism, like diving tourism in general, is still little developed by the tourist trade. Approximately 69% of the interviewees affirmed that they had never done any kind of diving.

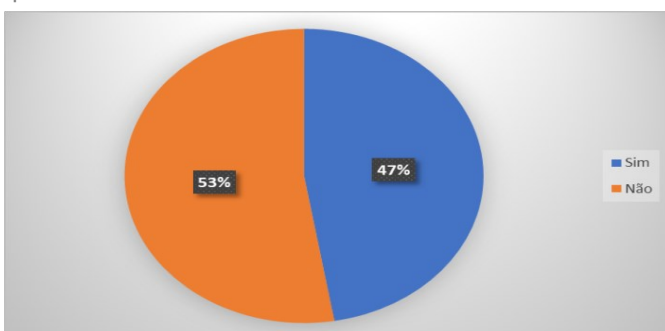
Figure 06 – Have you ever gone scuba diving? Sim-Yes and Não-No



Source: Elaborated by the authors 2022

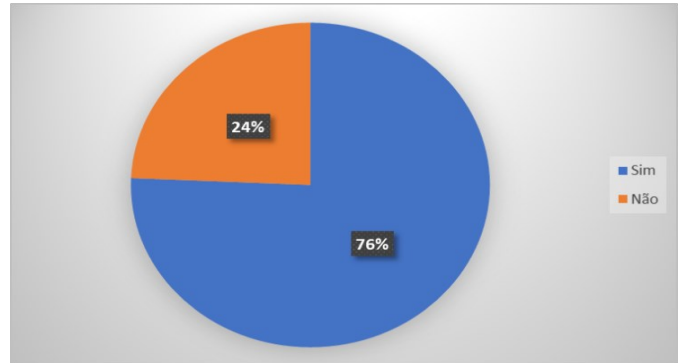
The next question was whether the interviewees knew about the existence of intentional shipwrecks for the practice of tourism. At this point, 53% of the interviewees said they were unaware of such practices.

Figure 07 –Historically it is known that shipwrecks have occurred along the Brazilian coast. Do you know that there are also intentional shipwrecks for tourism purposes?



Source: Elaborated by the authors 2022

Figure 08 – Do you know of any shipwrecks on the coast of Paraíba?

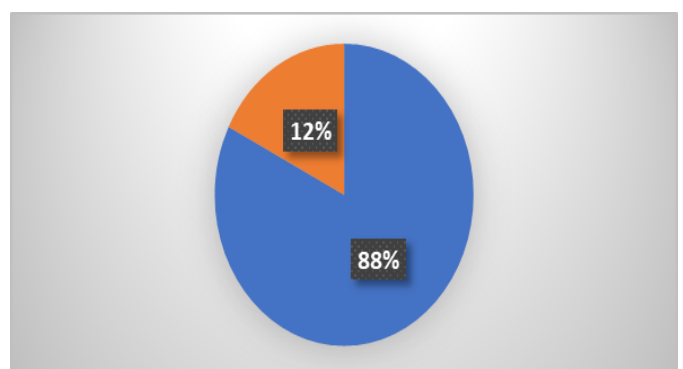


Source: Elaborated by the authors 2022

Considering the issue of shipwrecks in the coastal region of Paraíba, the lack of knowledge on the subject was even more evident. 76% of the interviewees said they were unaware of these historical facts, as shown by the graph in Figure 08:

When dealing with a particular shipwreck, the object of this work, it was observed that the number of people who claimed to know the steamship Alice was even smaller, with only about 12% saying they had heard of it. Thus, for 88% of the interviewees, the ship is still unknown as a potential tourist attraction. This means there considerable opportunities to use this shipwreck in different ways, both with tourists and with the tourist trade.

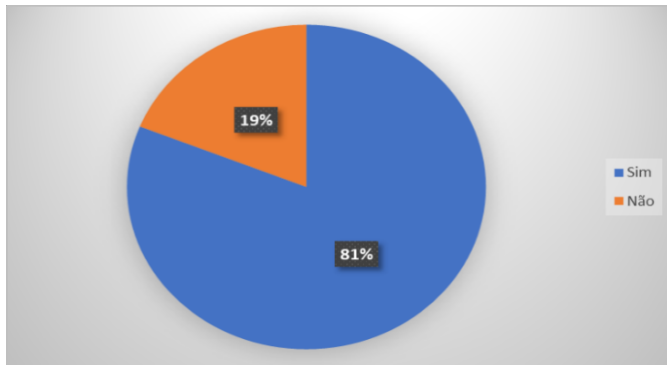
Figure 09 – There have been several shipwrecks along the coast of Paraíba, among them the wreck of the steamship Alice. Do you know anything about this



Source: Elaborated by the authors 2022

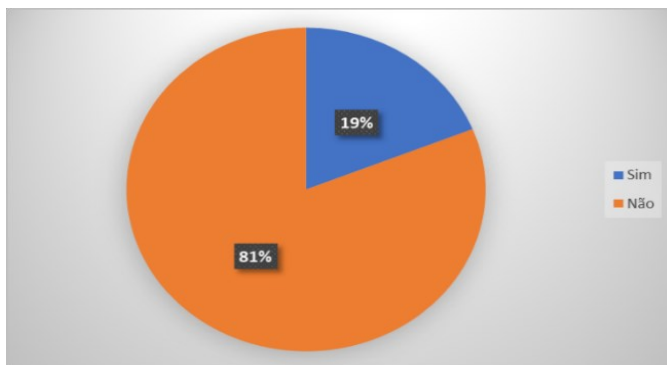
The next question sought to find out the tourist potential of the shipwreck. The respondents were asked if they thought Shipwreck Tourism had potential as a tourist activity in Paraíba; approximately 81% of the interviewees said they considered it to have potential, as illustrated in figure 10, below:

Figure 10 - Does shipwreck tourism have potential as a tourist activity in Paraíba



Source: Elaborated by the authors 2022

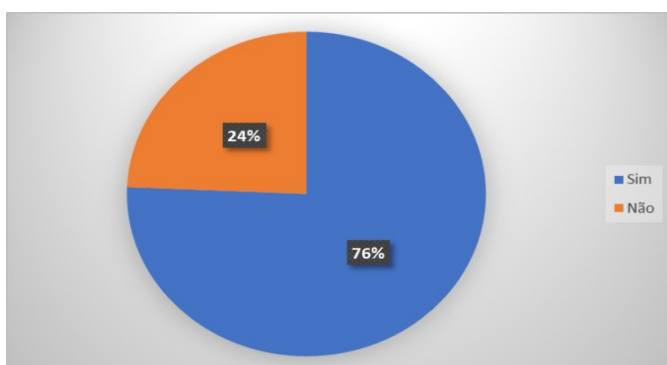
Figure 11 – Do you know of any company that provides advisory services for diving activities?



Source: Elaborated by the authors 2022

Despite considering shipwreck tourism as an activity with great potential, about 81% of the respondents said they did not know of any companies that offered this type of tour, reaffirming the general lack of knowledge of to the activity, as illustrated in figure 11.

Figure 12: The potential of wreck diving activities on the coast of Paraíba



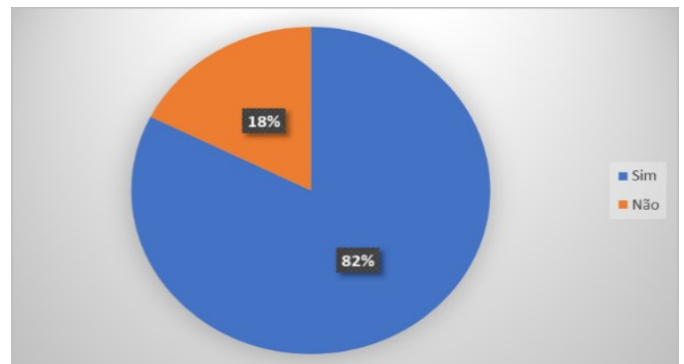
Source: Elaborated by the authors 2022

The majority of the interviewees (76%) reaffirmed the potential of shipwreck diving activity on the coast of Paraíba, stating that they would like to practice it if

they knew of a company that provided such a possibility.

Bearing in mind that the majority of the interviewees did not know about the activity, but would like to practice it, and this activity has important potential for the development of local tourism, the respondents were asked whether the private initiative should invest more in this type of activity. 82% said yes, there is potential for private investment in the sector, as illustrated in figure 13.

Figure 13 – In your opinion, should the private sector invest in promoting this kind of activity?



Source: Elaborated by the authors 2022

Finally, an open question was provided, and the respondents were invited to comment on what factors might lead them to practice shipwreck tourism on the coast of Paraíba. The main answer given was "curiosity" (22 respondents). Next was a motivational factor among the respondents, the "financial" issue, i.e. the costs of this practice, with 13 mentions. This was followed by some aspects related to "nature and culture", with 8 mentions. For 7 respondents, the important thing was to have "adequate services", with accredited companies to carry out the activity, while 5 said that the practice needs more "incentive and visibility". A further 5 respondents highlighted "opportunities" for tourists and the community to get to know and practice this tourist activity. Finally, two other groups of answers emerged, with 3 respondents indicating the need to formulate and implement "tourism public policies" to encourage and regulate the practice, and 2 respondents citing "safety" is a fundamental characteristic for strengthening shipwreck tourism around the steamship Alice.

Thus, it can be affirmed that in general, there is a relative lack of knowledge about shipwreck tourism. But it is apparent that this activity has enormous potential on the Paraíba coast.

## FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

This study shows that shipwreck tourism provides an opportunity for the tourist trade of the city of João



Pessoa. Investigating the possibility of shipwreck tourism on the steamship Alice on the coast of Paraíba, it was found that it helps promote knowledge and economic benefits. The positive aspects of the activity include job generation, income, and appreciation of the region, bearing in mind the ideal climatic conditions and the location of the wreck. Negative aspects, on the other hand, include the lack of historical knowledge and the lack of investments in the area, both public and private.

The predominant age group that expressed interest in the practice of shipwreck tourism was 27 to 40 years. There was a balance of men and women, with slightly more women expressing interest in activity.

The research showed that individuals are also unaware of the process of intentional shipwrecks, which are used for diving activities as well as for the conservation of marine life. Likewise, most of the interviewees were unaware of the wrecks along the Paraíba coast, including the steamship Alice. In this context, it is notable that when the tourists were informed about the shipwreck, most of them showed interest in practicing the activity. However, most of the respondents said they did not know any company that offers shipwreck tourism. It is seen, therefore, that despite the existence of a potential public and a market for the activity, there is an apparent lack of companies catering for this interest.

The wreck of the steamship Alice provides a good opportunity for shipwreck tourism, with local tourists expressing interest in visiting it. On the other hand, it was identified the research done so far on the subject of "shipwreck tourism" is insufficient to develop the activity. This leads to a lack of understanding about the nature of this tourism activity.

Finally, it is necessary to develop incentives for shipwreck tourism around the steamship Alice and other shipwrecks. For this, the commitment of government bodies is needed, together with the private initiative, to execute and disseminate shipwreck tourism as a tourism product.

## REFERENCES

- Austregésilo, M. E. (1950). Estudo sobre alguns tipos de transporte no Brasil Colonial. *Revista de História*, 1, 495-516.
- Beni, M. C. (2004). Como certificar o turismo sustentável. *Revista Espaço Acadêmico*.
- Carvalho, M. (2000). NAUFRÁGIOS DO BRASIL. Sistema de Informações de Naufrágios. Accessed on July 10th, 2022, available at NAUFRÁGIOS DO BRASIL: <https://www.naufragiosdobrasil.com.br/index.htm>
- Carvalho, M. (sd). Naufrágio Alice. Accessed on July 2nd, 2022, available at Naufrágios do Brasil: <https://www.naufragiosdobrasil.com.br/naufalice.htm>
- Cunha, J. (2017). Naufrágios & Vestígios Arqueológicos na Costa da Paraíba. Accessed on July 10th, 2022, available at YOUTUBE: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZrIKYvsODfM>
- França, J. M., Lima, M. C., & Mariano, E. F. (2021). Uma visão da percepção dos mergulhadores recreativos no litoral paraibano. *Revista Brasileira de Ecoturismo (RBEcotur)*, 14(1).
- OMT. (1995). Manual: Conceptos, definiciones y clasificaciones de las estadísticas. Accessed on July 8th, 2022, available from theWorld Tourism Organization: <https://www.unwto.org/>
- SECON/JP. (2020). Pesquisa destaca satisfação dos turistas nas praias, pontos turísticos e infraestrutura de João Pessoa. Accessed on June 18th, 2022, available from the Prefeitura de João Pessoa [João Pessoa City Hall]: <https://www.joaopessoa.pb.gov.br/noticias/pesquisa-destaca-satisfacao-dos-turistas-nas-praias-pontos-turisticos-e-infraestrutura-de-joao-pessoa/>