



## Management Functions at DouroAzul: An Applied Case Study

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The overall objective of this work is to analyze in detail the structure, historical trajectory, market, and strategies adopted by DouroAzul. To achieve this purpose, the specific objectives defined were: describing the history and evolution of the company, characterizing its service offering, identifying its mission, vision, and organizational values, and finally, critically evaluating its strategic planning in relation to the competition.

Regarding the methodology used, the research was based on the collection of information from diverse sources, including official company websites, tourism portals, public online databases, and specialized articles about the sector. As for the group's internal organization, the work resulted from a collaborative effort coordinated through meetings and an equitable distribution of tasks among the members.

**Keywords:** Douro Azul; Strategy; Strategic Planning; Leadership

### I. Introduction

This study aims to analyze the company DouroAzul, recognized as a leading operator in the river cruise sector on the Douro River in Portugal. Throughout this study, structuring elements of the organization will be explored, such as its historical evolution, business structure, portfolio of products and services, as well as its market positioning and the main competitive factors that underpin its strategic planning.

The choice of DouroAzul for this project is primarily justified by its high level of representation in regional and international tourism. Additionally, the company's significant impact on the Douro region's economy and its constant capacity for innovation and expansion, particularly in the luxury cruise segment, also weighed heavily in the decision.

Structurally, the report is divided into three main sections to facilitate understanding of the

analysis: the first is dedicated to a detailed presentation of the company, the second focuses on the analysis of management functions, with particular emphasis on strategic planning, and the third section concludes the work with a reflection and critical evaluation of the results obtained.

### II. Company presentation

#### 2.1 History of DouroAzul

The history of DouroAzul is intertwined with the very rebirth of tourism in the Douro Valley. Founded in 1993 by businessman Mário Ferreira, the company began its activity under the name Ferreira & Rayford, Lda., operating modestly with just one vessel. In that embryonic phase, the objective was to explore the scenic potential of the river, but the vision of its founder quickly pointed towards more ambitious horizons. In 1996, with the adoption of the definitive brand DouroAzul, the company began an unprecedented expansion cycle, transitioning from simple daily tours to the complex operation of luxury hotel-ships.

Over the following decades, DouroAzul transformed the paradigm of river cruises in Portugal, investing in the construction of cutting-edge vessels that combine modern design with environmental sustainability. This strategic growth allowed the company to capture high-value-added international markets, positioning the Douro as an elite destination on a global scale. Integrated into the Mystic Invest group, the brand not only consolidated its absolute leadership in the national territory but also achieved international prestige, being repeatedly awarded at the World Travel Awards as the best river cruise company in Europe. Today, DouroAzul is recognized as the main driver of tourism in the region, maintaining a constant commitment to innovation and excellence in the service it provides to the thousands of passengers it transports annually.



## 2.2 Legal framework

From a legal standpoint, the organization is constituted as DouroAzul – Sociedade Marítimo-Turística, SA, operating specifically in the river tourism cruise sector, leisure activities, and associated tourism services in the Douro Valley. Its range of products and services is diverse, encompassing everything from luxury cruises on hotel ships to trips on traditional Rabelo boats. Additionally, the company offers audio-guided city tours, helicopter services, and yacht tours.

## 2.3 Geographic location

Geographically, DouroAzul's headquarters are located at Rua de Miragaia, nº 103, in Porto. Its main operations take place along the Douro River, between the city of Porto and Barca D'Alva. Regarding its geographic market, the company has a strong presence both nationally and internationally, attracting tourists of various nationalities to the experiences it promotes in the region.

## 2.4 Size and positioning

Regarding the company's size, it is estimated that DouroAzul currently employs between 201 and 500 people. Although specific turnover figures are not publicly available, the organization maintains a prominent competitive position. It is considered the leading company in its segment in Portugal, distinguishing itself through the quality, innovation, and size of its fleet, even when compared to international competitors in the river cruise sector.

# III. Planning

## 3.1 Mission, vision and values

Within the scope of the analysis of DouroAzul's organizational planning, it is observed that, although the company does not formally publish a mission and vision in all its sources, its identity clearly positions itself as a tour operator focused on service quality and the promotion of Douro culture.

Additionally, its values of excellence and innovation are embodied through investment in comfortable ships and cutting-edge technology, always focusing on sustainable tourism experiences. DouroAzul.

It is important to note that the mission, vision, and values presented are the result of an interpretative analysis, since the company does not explicitly define them officially.

## 3.2 Strategic planning

Regarding strategic planning, the company demonstrates clear continuity through the expansion of its fleet and the development of complementary tourism products, resulting in international recognition reflected in several industry awards. In terms of time horizon and main objectives, DouroAzul's medium- to long-term goals focus on consolidating its position as a global leader in river cruises. To achieve this status, the organization is committed to expanding services and rigorously integrating sustainable practices.

Thus, the strategies adopted involve not only increasing the fleet, but also an active presence at international trade fairs and constant innovation in services, including recruitment initiatives to sustain growth. Consequently, the company's planning process appears to be intrinsically linked to continuous growth and the promotion of the Douro region as a leading international destination.

## 3.3 Planning process

Regarding the operationalization of this planning, DouroAzul combines three distinct levels of plans: strategic plans, focused on market expansion; tactical plans, aimed at brand promotion and customer experience; and operational plans, designed for the daily management of fleets and routes. Finally, this entire structure is supported by management by objectives (GPO), which aligns expansion and offerings with global standards of excellence, innovation, and sustainability in the tourism market.

## 3.4 Internal analysis

### 3.4.1 VRIO Analysis

After understanding the organizational structure, it becomes essential to analyze the internal factors that underpin its leadership in the river tourism sector. The company's ability to maintain continuous growth and a distinctive luxury offering is not accidental, but rather the result of specific resources and capabilities that differentiate it from the competition. To identify which of these elements constitute true competitive advantages, the VRIO matrix is used, which assesses whether the organization's resources are valuable, rare, difficult to imitate, and whether the company is properly organized to exploit them.

Table 1 - VRIO Analysis of DouroAzul

Resource	Valuable? Rare?		Difficult to imitate?	Organized?	Competitive Statute
Fleet of Luxury Hotel Ships	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Advantage Competitive



					Sustainable
Brand and Reputation (World Travel Awards)	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Advantage Competitive Sustainable
Knowledge of the Region of Douro	Yes	No	—	Yes	Advantage Competitive Temporary
Leadership and Charisma of Mario Ferreira	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Advantage Competitive Sustainable
Processes Certification (ISO 9001/14001)	Yes	No	—	Yes	Competitive Parity

Based on Table 1, a detailed analysis of DouroAzul's assets reveals that its prominent position in the Douro region is supported by a set of strategic resources:

- State-of-the-art hotel-ship fleet: This is a highly valuable and rare asset, as the company invests in vessels that combine modern design with environmental sustainability, making them difficult to imitate due to the capital and technology involved.
- Brand and international reputation: The prestige achieved, evident in the World Travel Awards, is a valuable and rare asset that generates immediate trust in the global market. It is difficult for new entrants to imitate, and the organization capitalizes on this value through a marketing strategy focused on the elite segment.
- Culture and charismatic leadership: The founder's influence and the informal solidarity networks among the crews are valuable and unique resources. This company identity is difficult for competitors to replicate, and the delegated authority structure allows this cultural agility to translate into operational efficiency.
- Quality and environmental certifications: Resources such as ISO 9001 and 14001 certifications are valuable for ensuring compliance and excellence, but, because they are not uncommon in the sector, they represent an essential market requirement for operation.

### 3.4.2 SWOT Analysis

Understanding the organizational effectiveness of DouroAzul requires a detailed diagnosis of its endogenous factors. SWOT analysis was used to cross-reference internal resources and capabilities with market demands, allowing the identification of whether the organization possesses the necessary competencies to sustain its competitive advantage. Through strengths analysis, distinctive assets are identified, such as a state-of-the-art fleet and absolute leadership in the sector. Simultaneously, identifying weaknesses exposes vulnerabilities, namely the centralization of decision-making and barriers in hierarchical communication, which can hinder the company's agility in the face of unforeseen operational events.

Forces:

- Market leadership: Recognized as the leading operator in the Douro River cruise sector and the best river cruise company in Europe.
- State-of-the-art fleet: Constant investment in modern vessels that combine luxury, design and cutting-edge technology.
- Reputation and brand: A solid brand with high international prestige and repeatedly awarded at the World Travel Awards.
- Defined organizational structure: It has a clear hierarchy (Linear Staff) with competencies well distributed among the strategic, tactical, and operational levels.
- Strong organizational culture: Influenced by the founder's charisma, promoting cohesion and solidarity networks among the crews.
- Quality certifications: Holding ISO 9001 (quality) and ISO 14001 (environment)



standards, guaranteeing international operating standards. Weaknesses:

- Centralization in decision-making: Financial and expansion decisions tend to be centralized in management, which can reduce agility in certain contexts.
- Hierarchical Internal Communication: Reliance on a chain network for formal matters can limit employee participation and create barriers to horizontal communication.
- Insufficient strategic communication: There is a gap in the formal, internal communication of the mission, vision, and values to employees.
- Generic human resources management: Difficulty in applying personalized motivation strategies in the face of the great diversity of professional groups (crew vs. administrative).
- Structural rigidity: A complex hierarchical structure can lead to greater bureaucracy and less organizational flexibility in the face of rapid changes.

### 3.5 External analysis

#### 3.5.1 SWOT Analysis

Beyond the internal dimension, the strategic success of DouroAzul is inseparable from the environmental variables that management does not directly control. This aspect of SWOT analysis is fundamental to anticipating trends and preparing the organization for external risks, ensuring that strategic planning remains resilient.

The focus will be on opportunities, such as expansion into new markets and the growing appreciation of sustainable tourism, and on threats, which include the sector's strong seasonality and dependence on climatic and environmental factors that affect the navigability of the Douro River and operational costs. Opportunities:

- Growth in luxury tourism: Increased global demand for exclusive experiences and elite destinations, a segment where the company is already well-positioned.
- Expansion into international markets: Opportunity to capture new high value-added markets through participation in international trade fairs.
- Sustainable tourism: Growing consumer environmental concerns favor companies that invest in clean technologies and sustainable practices.
- Synergies with the Mystic Invest group: Leveraging the ownership group's structure for global expansion and resource sharing.

- Digitization and innovation: Using new information systems to improve customer experience and booking efficiency.

Threats:

- Seasonality: The strong dependence on the tourist season in the Douro region can limit planning and profitability during periods of low demand.
- Economic instability: External economic factors that can reduce the purchasing power of international tourists.
- International competition: Presence of other river cruise operators competing for the same market segment.
- Environmental factors and currents: Natural river conditions (such as strong currents or droughts) that affect fuel consumption and navigability.
- Strict regulations: Changes in international maritime safety standards or stricter environmental requirements that necessitate unforeseen investments.

#### 3.5.2 PESTAL Analysis

PESTAL analysis allows DouroAzul to monitor the macro environment surrounding its operation, identifying variables that, while uncontrollable, directly impact its strategic planning and the sustainability of the business.

- Political: Political stability in Portugal is essential for the confidence of international tourists. Government policies to encourage tourism in the Douro region and regulations from the Port of Leixões/APDL regarding river navigability are also important.
- Economic: Dependence on the purchasing power of source markets (USA, Europe). Inflation and fluctuating fuel prices directly impact fleet operating costs.
- Sociocultural: Shifting consumer preferences towards luxury tourism and niche experiences. The appreciation of the Douro Valley's culture and heritage as a differentiating factor.
- Technological: Investment in cutting-edge ships with state-of-the-art technology. Use of information systems for reservation management and digital marketing to attract global clients.
- Environmental: Focus on sustainable tourism and reducing the



environmental impact of the fleet. Risks associated with climatic phenomena (droughts or floods) that affect navigability and the management of fuel diversions.

- Legal: Compliance with international maritime safety standards. Mandatory certifications such as ISO 9001 and ISO 14001, in addition to labor legislation for national and international crews.

### 3.5.3 Porter's Five Forces Analysis

While PESTAL analysis looks at the macro-environment, Porter's Five Forces analysis looks specifically at the micro-environment, the cruise business. This analysis is essential and was carried out to identify the competitive factors that underpin Douro Azul's strategic planning. Through this model, it is possible to assess how the company's market leadership and its integration into the Mystic Invest group act as barriers to entry for new competitors, while also analyzing the impact of international competition and leisure alternatives in the region. This reflection allows us to understand how the organization adjusts its luxury and innovation offering to maintain a leading position in an increasingly dynamic and demanding sector.

Rivalry between competitors: moderate to high level.

- Market leadership: Douro Azul is the absolute leader in the Douro River cruise segment in Portugal.
- Differentiation: The company distinguishes itself through the quality, innovation, and size of its fleet of luxury river cruise ships.
- International competition: It faces international rivals operating in the river cruise sector, which demands a constant commitment to excellence and sustainability.

Bargaining power of suppliers: moderate level

- Shipbuilding and maintenance: The company relies on shipyards and specialized maintenance for its fleet.
- Human resources: The need for qualified crews and hospitality staff is critical, which gives some power to specialized professionals in the sector.
- Fuel: External factors such as fuel prices and river currents influence operating costs, over which the company has limited control.

Buyer bargaining power: moderate to high.

- Luxury segment: The target audience, both national and international, is demanding and seeks elite experiences, which empowers them through quality-based choices.
- Transparency of information: Through tourism portals and social networks, customers can easily compare offers and rate their satisfaction, which the company rigorously monitors.
- Leisure alternatives: The client can opt for other types of tourism in the region, such as yacht tours, helicopter tours, or traditional tours, if the perceived value is not adequate.

Threat of new entrants: low level

- Capital barriers: The sector requires massive investment in the construction of cutting-edge vessels and state-of-the-art technology.
- Experience curve: Douro Azul has been operating since 1993, possessing in-depth knowledge of the region and a consolidated brand (integrated into the Mystic Invest group).
- Geographic limitations: The operation is restricted to the Porto - Barca D'Alva axis, where logistics and port calls are already efficiently coordinated by the leading company.

Threat of substitute services: moderate level

- Regional Tourism: Other ways to explore the Douro Valley, such as train journeys, audio-guided city tours, or accommodation in rural tourism units (farms), compete for the tourist's time and budget.
- Internal Diversification: Douro Azul itself mitigates this threat by offering a variety of products, from traditional Rabelo boats to luxury services and corporate events.

## IV. Organization and organizational structure

### 4.1 Company organizational chart

Douro Azul adopts a hierarchical and functional structure, whose organizational chart is led by the board of directors. This leadership is followed by specific departmental directors, namely the commercial, operations, hospitality and financial areas, which play the vital role of supporting the entire fleet of river cruise ships.

In terms of structure, the organization is characterized as Linear-Staff, presenting a rigidly defined hierarchy that extends from the hotel director to the crew. This chain of command does not operate in isolation; it is



complemented by staff units specialized in critical areas such as maritime safety and marketing. These support units are fundamental for technical decision-making, ensuring that the line authority is assisted by specialized consulting whenever necessary.

The company adopts a functional organizational structure, with a clear definition of responsibilities, which facilitates internal coordination and decision-making.

#### 4.2 Departmentalization and hierarchical levels

To manage the complexity of its operations, the company adopts a combined departmentalization criterion. From a functional point of view, the structure is divided into specialized departments (HR, Marketing and Naval Maintenance). Simultaneously, a geographical logic is applied, where each ship operates as an autonomous "mobile unit," and a segmentation by clients, distinguishing between luxury cruises, corporate events and large-scale tourism.

This organization is reflected in three distinct hierarchical levels:

1. Strategic Level: Composed of management, focused on defining routes and major investments.
2. Tactical Level: Where operations directors and fleet managers ensure logistics and schedule coordination.
3. Operational Level: Composed of commanders, head chefs, and supervisors who perform the direct service.

#### 4.3 Authority, delegation and communication

With regard to the exercise of power, the company maintains a generally centralized stance in financial and expansion decisions. However, there is a high degree of operational delegation, granting autonomy to Commanders and Hospitality Directors for the resolution of immediate incidents. This balance is supported by different types of authority: line authority (direct between Directors and Commanders), staff authority (legal and technical advice), and functional authority (such as that of HR, which dictates standards of conduct across the entire fleet).

Operational efficiency is ensured by adaptable communication networks. For formal and hierarchical matters, a chain network is used, while in emergency situations or hospitality services, where speed is vital, a circular or "all-channel" network is preferred.

#### 4.4 Culture and informal organization

Finally, it is impossible to separate the formal structure from the informal dynamics of the company. The organizational culture is strongly influenced by the charisma of its founder. Given the nature of the work, where crews live together on the ships, informal solidarity networks are created that facilitate the resolution of problems outside official channels, providing agility and cohesion to the operation of Douro Azul.

### V. Direction

Management plays a central role in the administration of Douro Azul, as it involves coordinating people, leading teams, and defining strategies to achieve organizational goals. According to Douro Azul's institutional website, the company operates in the river tourism sector, offering cruises on the Douro River, and the quality of service provided is heavily dependent on the performance and motivation of its employees.

#### 5.1 Motivation

Employee motivation is a key aspect at Douro Azul, especially due to the strong component of direct contact with the customer. According to Chiavenato (human resources management), motivation results from a combination of financial and non-financial factors, which is reflected in the common practices adopted by companies in the tourism sector.

Based on common practices in the tourism sector, Douro Azul seeks to motivate its employees through tools such as job security, performance recognition, continuous training, and career advancement opportunities. The Human Resources Department is primarily responsible for defining and implementing these strategies, supporting employees throughout their professional journey within the company.

There are clear differences between the various groups of employees, namely between crews, onboard hospitality teams, administrative staff and operational teams on land.

These differences require distinct motivational approaches, adapted to the roles performed and the specific working conditions of each group.

#### 5.2 Leadership

Leadership at Douro Azul plays a crucial role in guiding teams and maintaining high quality standards. According to Douro Azul's institutional website and available institutional information, the company has a well-defined hierarchical structure, typical of organizations in the tourism and river transport sector.

According to Robbins, leadership styles can vary depending on the context and needs of the



organization. In this sense, Douro Azul appears to predominantly adopt a democratic leadership style, encouraging employee participation and cooperation between teams. However, in situations requiring quick decisions, such as security issues or compliance with legal regulations, a more authoritarian leadership style is adopted.

It is possible to identify the existence of charismatic leaders, especially in middle management positions, who stand out for their ability to motivate teams and create a good work environment. In addition to formal leadership, associated with hierarchical positions, there is also the presence of informal leadership, exercised by more experienced employees who are recognized by their colleagues.

### 5.3 Communication

Internal communication is an essential element for the proper functioning of Douro Azul. Following common practices in the tourism sector, the company uses both downward and upward formal communication channels. Downward communication occurs through meetings, institutional emails, and internal circulars, while upward communication is promoted through team meetings, direct contact with management, and performance evaluation sessions.

Regarding the type of communication network, it is mostly hierarchical, reflecting the company's organizational structure. However, there is also more horizontal communication between operational teams, necessary to ensure the coordination of services.

According to Douro Azul's institutional website, the company uses information systems for reservation management, service planning, and internal organization, which contributes to more efficient communication and a reduction in operational errors. Beyond formal communication, there is a strong component of informal communication, very common in work environments characterized by close relationships between employees. This informal communication contributes to strengthening interpersonal relationships, improving the organizational climate, and increasing team cohesion.

## 6 Control

### 6.1 Levels of organizational control

Within the company's organizational management, the control system is structured in a multidimensional way, encompassing strategic, tactical, and operational levels. Firstly, at the strategic level, the focus is on analyzing market share and the return on investment (ROI) of new vessels. Complementarily, tactical

control ensures financial and logistical viability through annual budgets per vessel and monitoring of seasonal occupancy levels. At the operational level, the company focuses on the details of the customer experience, using rigorous checklists to guarantee the cleanliness, safety, and quality of the meals served.

### 6.2 Quality standards and tolerance levels

To support these operations, the organization adopts international standards of excellence. Compliance is ensured by ISO 9001 (quality management) and ISO 14001 (environmental management) certifications, in addition to strict adherence to international maritime safety standards.

In this context, defining tolerance levels is crucial: while error margins for safety are minimal, there is controlled flexibility regarding variable costs, such as fuel consumption, which can be influenced by external factors like river currents.

### 6.3 Monitoring and analysis of deviations

Monitoring of these standards is done through deviation analysis at defined intervals: daily, through in-flight service reports, and monthly, in financial and operational analysis meetings with management. This continuous monitoring allows for the early identification of any deviations from established standards.

### 6.4 Control process cycle and corrective actions

The control process itself unfolds in four fundamental phases. It begins with the establishment of objectives (such as achieving 95% satisfaction), followed by performance measurement through customer questionnaires. Subsequently, a comparison is made between the observed reality and the outlined objective. If discrepancies are detected, such as a low satisfaction score on a cruise, immediate corrective actions are implemented, which may include additional crew training or preventive engine maintenance.

### 6.5 Stakeholders and continuous improvement

Finally, this control ecosystem relies on the active collaboration of key stakeholders. The quality director, captains, and external auditors work together to verify vessel compliance, ensuring that corrective actions not only resolve specific problems but also promote continuous improvement in the company's overall operation.

## 7 Analysis and critical reflection

### 7.1 Evaluation of mission, vision and values

According to Douro Azul's institutional website, the company's mission is geared towards providing high-quality tourism services, offering unique experiences on the Douro River.

The vision is linked to consolidating the company as a benchmark in river tourism, while the values are



centered on professionalism, safety, quality, and customer focus.

In general, there is consistency between the defined mission, vision, and values and the practices adopted. However, it is considered that the internal dissemination of these strategic elements could be strengthened. Based on common practices in the tourism sector, clear communication of the mission and values contributes to greater alignment of employees with organizational objectives.

#### 7.2 Reflection on objectives and planning

Douro Azul's strategic objectives appear to be geared towards sustainable growth, innovation, and service excellence. Based on common practices in the tourism sector, planning plays a fundamental role in anticipating demand, efficiently managing resources, and adapting to market requirements.

Despite this, the strong dependence on external factors, such as seasonality and economic conditions, can represent a limitation to long-term planning, making it necessary to define alternative strategies and greater organizational flexibility.

#### 7.3 Benefits and limitations of the organizational structure

The organizational structure of Douro Azul presents clear benefits, namely the clear definition of roles, responsibilities, and lines of authority. According to Mintzberg, hierarchical structures are common in organizations with high operational complexity, allowing for greater control and coordination of activities.

However, this type of structure can also lead to some limitations, such as less flexibility, greater bureaucracy, and potential difficulties in communication between hierarchical levels. In this sense, strengthening horizontal communication can contribute to greater organizational agility and efficiency.

#### 7.4 Evaluation of motivational strategies

According to Chiavenato, employee motivation is directly related to the satisfaction of their needs, recognition, and opportunities for development.

The motivational strategies adopted by Douro Azul, such as continuous training, job stability, and performance-based rewards, are aligned with classic motivational theories, such as Maslow's hierarchy of needs and Herzberg's two-factor theory.

However, the diversity of roles within the company can make the uniform application of these strategies difficult, making it advisable to personalize motivational tools more effectively, according to the characteristics and expectations of different groups of employees.

#### 7.5 Analysis of leadership and communication

Leadership at Douro Azul demonstrates a concern for team coordination and maintaining high quality standards. According to Robbins, effective leadership depends on the suitability of the style to the organizational context, with a combination of democratic and authoritarian styles being appropriate to the demands of the sector.

Regarding communication, the existence of formal and informal channels that facilitate the organization's functioning is observed. However, excessively hierarchical communication can limit employee participation, so it would be beneficial to encourage more frequent and structured feedback mechanisms.

#### 7.6 Adequacy of control mechanisms

Existing control mechanisms, such as performance evaluations, operational procedures, and information systems, allow for monitoring results and ensuring service quality. Based on common practices in the tourism sector, these mechanisms prove to be adequate for the company's needs.

However, it is important to ensure that control mechanisms are not perceived as excessively rigid, so as not to compromise the autonomy and motivation of employees.

#### 7.7 Suggestions for improvement

Key suggestions for improvement include strengthening internal communication of the mission, vision, and values; implementing motivational strategies better suited to different employee groups; and promoting greater participation in decision-making. Additionally, investing in the development of middle management and creating formal feedback opportunities could contribute to improving the organizational climate and increasing the company's overall effectiveness.

### VIII. Conclusion

The completion of this work allowed us to satisfactorily achieve the initially defined objectives, providing a structured analysis of the Douro Azul company that made it possible to understand its historical evolution, the nature of its activity, and its strategic market positioning. Through the collection and analysis of information, it was possible to deepen knowledge about the functioning of a benchmark organization in the river tourism sector, successfully relating the theoretical content taught in the curricular unit to practical business reality.

The main results obtained demonstrate that Douro Azul is a solid and well-positioned company in both the national and international markets, sustaining its prestige through a strong commitment to service quality, constant innovation, and the



promotion of the Douro region. A rigorous strategic plan oriented towards expansion and differentiation from the competition was observed, supported by management by objectives that aligns its offering with global standards of excellence and sustainability. This study showed that the company's organizational structure, although robust and with well-defined lines of authority, benefits from the coexistence of a formal organization and informal networks of solidarity among the crews, which provide agility to the operation.

It is also concluded that the effectiveness of Douro Azul is enhanced by a multidimensional control system that monitors everything from the return on investment at the strategic level to the details of the customer experience at the operational level.

In the field of management, the combination of democratic leadership styles with the necessary authority in security situations proves adequate to the demands of the sector. In short, the work reinforced the fundamental importance of management functions for organizational success, suggesting that the company's future will depend on strengthening internal communication of its mission and values, as well as personalizing motivation strategies for its various employee groups, thus ensuring continuous improvement and maintaining its market leadership.

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