

## **Gastronomy as main attraction of a tourism destination Case Study of Mealhada – Portugal**

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### **What is a tourism attraction?**

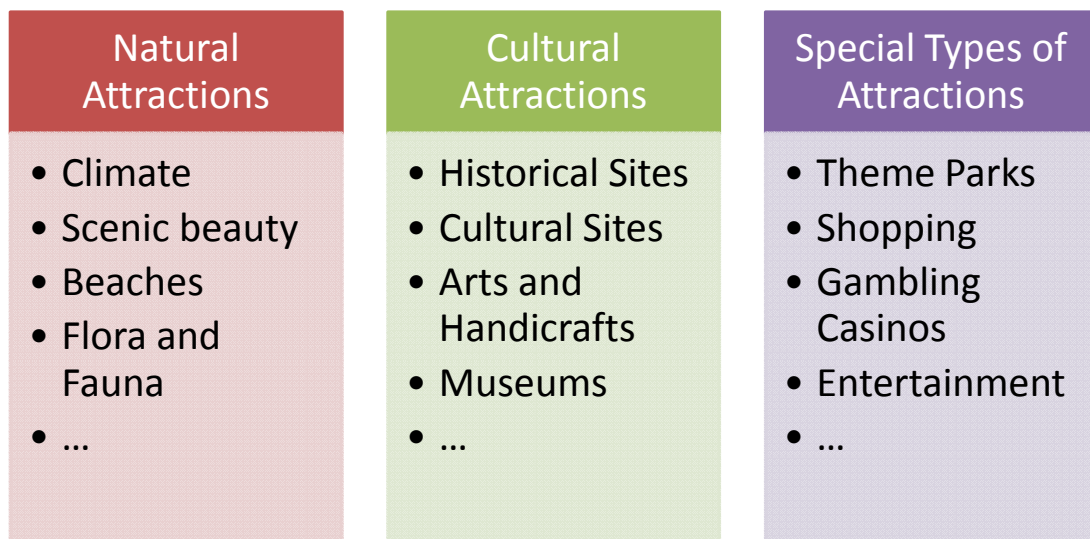
*There are many academic definitions...*

- “Attractions are arguably the most important component in the tourism system. They are the main motivators for tourist trips and are the core of the tourism product.” (Swarbrooke, J., 2002)
- “Tourism attraction is any element or factor that triggers the movement of people out of their habitual residence and that by itself or jointly with others, guarantees the existence of tourist activity” (Cunha, 2001)

## About Attractions Typologies

- Several models;
- Different perspectives:  
according to...
  - ❖ their characteristics;
  - ❖ Property;
  - ❖ Attractiveness;
  - ❖ length of stay that provide;
  - ❖ ....
- In this communication we will just refer 2 models:
  - ❖ Inskip (1991)
  - ❖ Swarbrooke (2001)

### Inskip Model



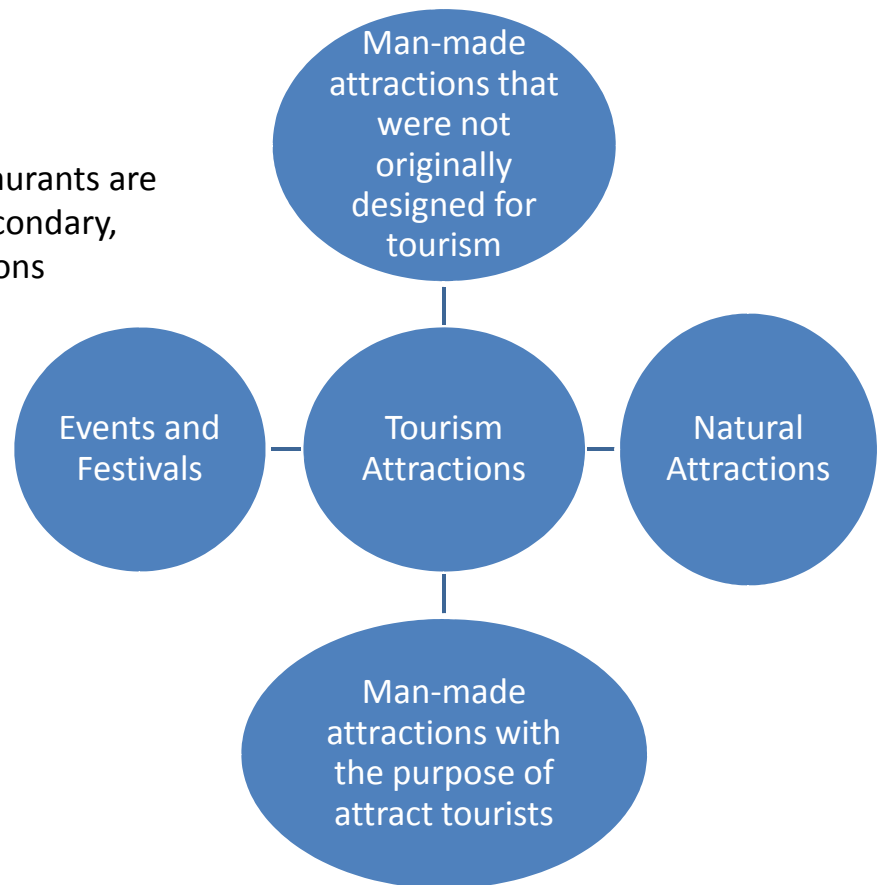
The autor refers: "The food of an area, in addition to being an important service for tourists, can be a significant secondary attraction..."



Relegated to second plain

## Swarbrooke Model

Swarbrooke states that restaurants are important in tourism but secondary, because they aren't attractions



- In general, tourist attractions models doesn't mention the gastronomy as attraction;
- Gastronomy is seen only as a service necessary for the practice of tourism;
- Even in some recent "Tourism Introduction" books, gastronomy is not mentioned as relevant attraction;
- However, gastronomic tourism exist, and for some destinations, gastronomy is the main tourist attraction



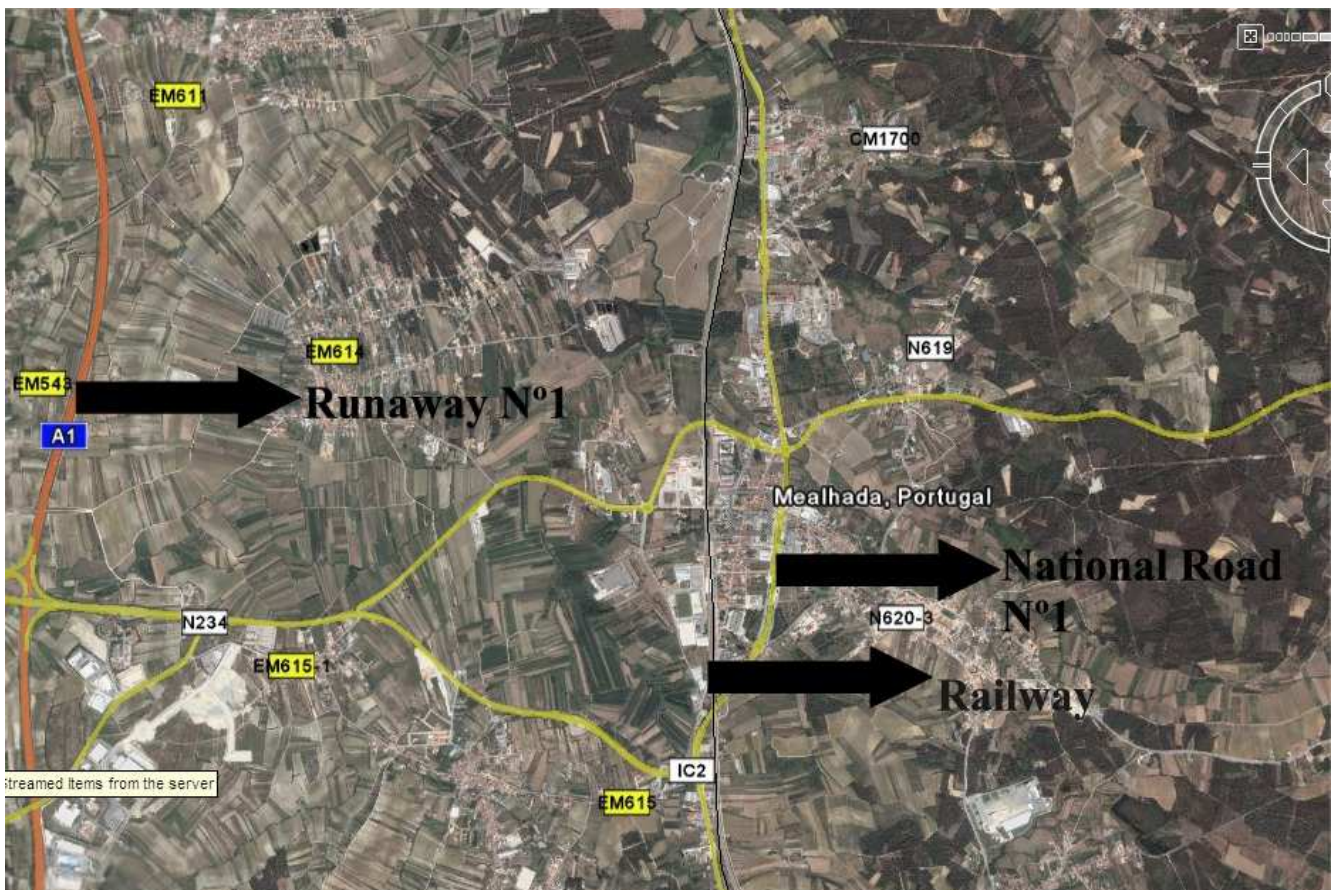
## Destination Presentation

### Mealhada

- Small Portuguese city
- +/- 4000 habitants
- Excellent localization



Credits: C. M. Mealhada



Source: Simão Oliveira



Credits: Simão Oliveira



Credits: Simão Oliveira



Credits: C. M. Mealhada

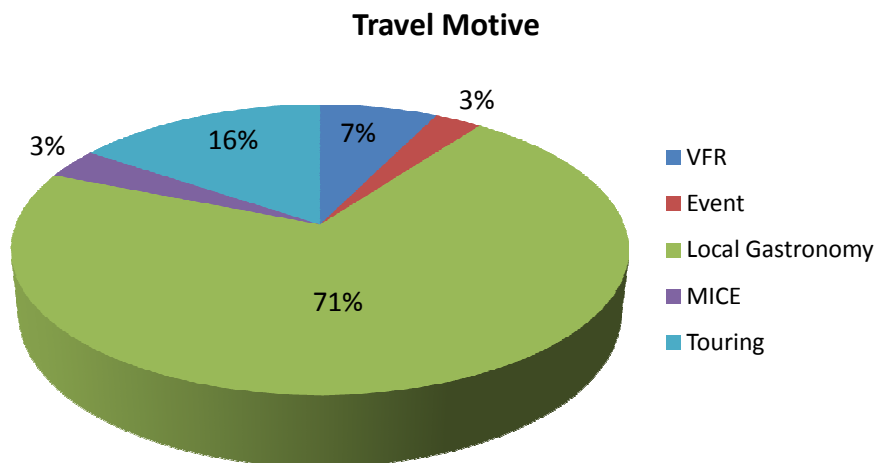
## Case Study Methodology

*(developed in the context of a Master Thesis at University of Aveiro)*

- Bibliographic research;
- Direct observation;
- Interviews to opinion makers (June-September 2007);
- Questionnaire to visitors (August 2007) with 4 parts:
  1. Eliminary (only wanted answers from visitors);
  2. Experience in destination;
  3. Experience related to gastronomic tourism;
  4. Sample Characterization.

## Conclusions and Considerations Relating to the Case Study

- Sample N=206
- Gastronomy is the main attraction of Mealhada, and the primary motive of visitors displacement

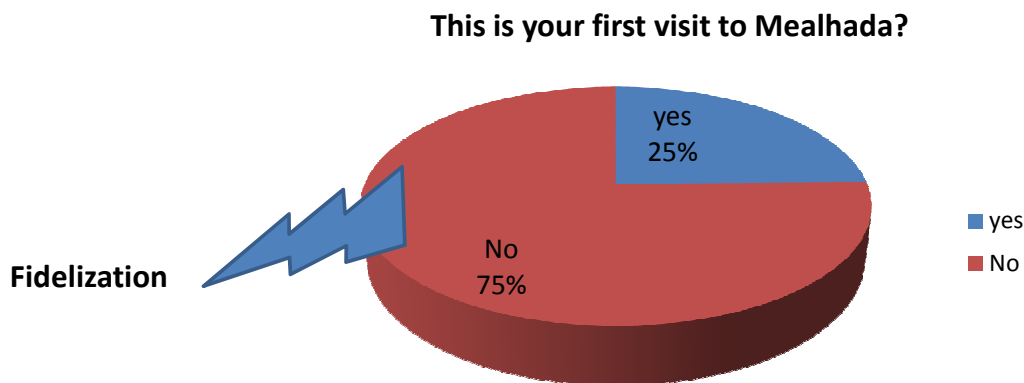


- 32 *pax* mentions gastronomy as secondary motive

## Demographic Profile of Mealhada Visitors

- Residence in the North and Centre of Portugal;
- Slight male predominance (56%);
- Majority of visitors between 25 and 65 years old (Heterogeneity);
- High School and Graduate Degree predominant in terms of level of education.

## Mealhada Visitor Behavior



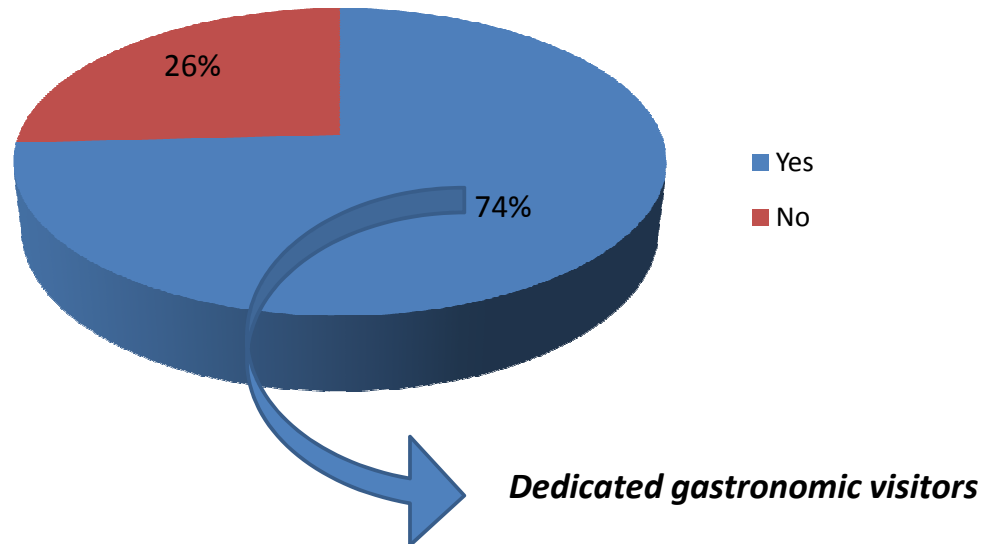
## The Tourism in Mealhada

- Excessive dependence on a single tourist resource;
- Economic dependence - 800 families working in restaurant industry;
- There's no sustainable planning;
- Weak involvement of entrepreneurs in the restaurant industry;
- No qualified labor force;
- Number of overnight stays and average stay has dropped

## Conclusions and Considerations Relating to gastronomic visitors

One of the main objectives of this case study was to understand better the people that regular travels for gastronomic motives, so in the 3<sup>o</sup> part of the questionnaire was applied a filter question:

**Do you usually travel only for gastronomic motives?**



### Significative Diferences between Dedicated Gastronomic Visitors and Other Visitors

Using Chi-square test for a significance level of 5%:

- Sex and age group do not show statistically significant relationships
- In terms of education level, there is a significant relationship, concluding that dedicated gastronomic visitors trend to possess qualifications, in general, superior to other types of visitors;
- There´s also a significant relationship regarding the practice of touring. The dedicated gastronomic visitors trend to practice more the activity of touring than other types of visitors.

## **Dedicated Gastronomic Visitor Behavior**

- Nearly 60% is able to travel between 100-300 Km just for gastronomic motives;
- 68% buy regional products in the gastronomic destination to eat at home;
- 42% buy regional gastronomic products to offer to familiars and friends;
- In the gastronomic destinations they seek:
  1. Good gastronomy;
  2. Quality;
  3. Good service;
  4. Authenticity

## **Limitations and Considerations regarding the case study**

- The case study presented is predominantly exploratory and descriptive, requiring further investigation;
- The questionnaire was administered only during the month of August 2007. It would be important that the timeframe was longer;
- The variable income of visitors was not analyzed. In future studies the income shouldn't be ignored;
- This study demonstrates that the gastronomy may be in fact the main tourist attraction of a destination. Although the classical models do not refer gastronomy as relevant tourism attraction, in fact, it can be;
- Mealhada is a successful tourism destination, however, the dependence on a single attraction may compromise the sustainability of the destination in the future and at various levels;

- It is urgent to develop a strategic plan for the destination articulated with the Wine Route of Bairrada;
- The fact of dedicated gastronomic visitors buy regional products to eat at home or has souvenir, may be important for local economies, leading to new business or as complement of others;
- Gastronomic Tourism is a emergent niche market with great potential, but needs in-depth academic studies, especially at the level of consumer behavior and promotion;
- With this simple case study presented, it is expected to have made a small contribution to increase the “state of the art” concerning gastronomic tourism, however in the future the IPL and UC will develop more research in this area.

**Thank you for your attention!!**