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Gastronomy as Tourist Attraction of a Destination

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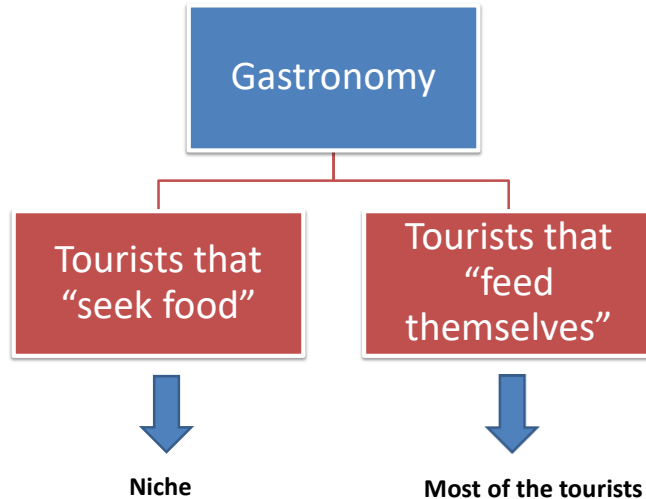
Tourism Today

- Significant changes in its supply;
- Changes are motivated by the need of adjustment to the actual demand, which seek new types of experiences, different sensations and new destinations;
- Tourists travel more annually , are more knowledgeable about the destinations and products offered , seeking new sensory experiences;
- Niche Tourism has gained importance – rural tourism, ecotourism, gastronomic tourism, dark tourism, etc.



Gastronomy as Tourist Attraction

Bernier (2003) says that related to gastronomy we can have:



- Tourists that “seek food” are a minority, a niche of people that practices Gastronomic Tourism;
- Gastronomic Tourism can be defined according to Oliveira (2011), as *“displacement of visitors, with the main motive of gastronomy, involving practices ranging from the displacement from residence to a restaurant to taste a delicacy; visit a destination to learn how to cook certain foods; travel in gastronomic routes in order to learn something more about local gastronomy, among others”*
- However gastronomy can be important as a secondary or complementary motive of displacement, particularly in rural places.



Analysis of three cases in Portugal

- **Touristic Development Pole of the Western Region**

(Macro Area with a great part of rural territory);

- **Mealhada**

(Village with deep rural roots);

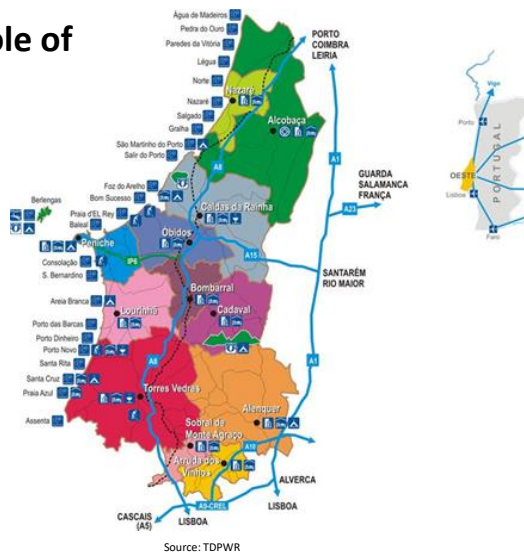
- **Covide**

(a very small rural place in the entrance of the only portuguese National Park).



Touristic Development Pole of the Western Region

- Area of 2220,2 km²;
- 367 636 inhabitants ;
- Population density of 165,6 inhabitants per km²;
- 12 councils;
- Great agricultural legacy;
- 2 Natural parks in the area;
- Rural tourism consolidated;
- Excellent accessibilities to the portuguese major city, Lisbon.

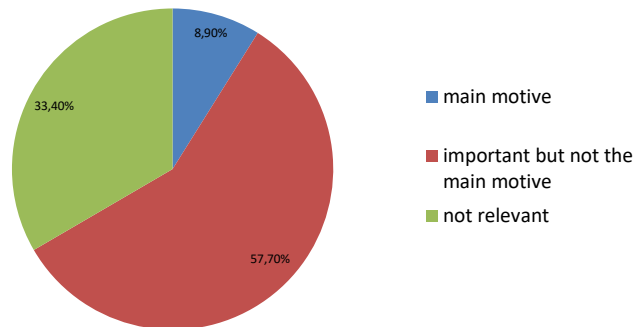




- Study developed in 2010-2011 (*final report will be published in the end of 2012*);

- Sample N=863 (demand);

- For 8,9% from the inquired visitors, gastronomy was the **main motive** of displacement (clearly a niche). However for 57,7% gastronomy **was not the main motive but was important as attraction**.



For 66,6% from the respondents (N=575), gastronomy is associated to traveling to the West region as a primary or secondary attraction, which reveals its importance in the tourism context.

Some Considerations Regarding the study

- “The West” is a destination with conditions to offer quality gastronomic tourism;
- Gastronomic tourism is a niche (majority daily visitors), however, gastronomy from the region is important as secondary attraction;
- It is evident, that for the visitors, gastronomy is clearly part of the cultural legacy from the destination;
- The rural areas from the West should potentiate the gastronomy authenticity in order to attract more visitors;
- It is recommended to create a Gastronomic Route in the rural areas to promote sustainable development;
- From the supply side analysis, it was concluded that local actors perceive the relevance of gastronomy and are sensitive to it, suggesting ways to streamline the product and show a desire for greater interest from public administration;

Mealhada

- Small Portuguese village;
- +/- 4000 inhabitants;
- Council with 20701 inhabitants;
- Excellent localization;
- Strong agricultural roots.



Source: C. M. Mealhada



Source: author

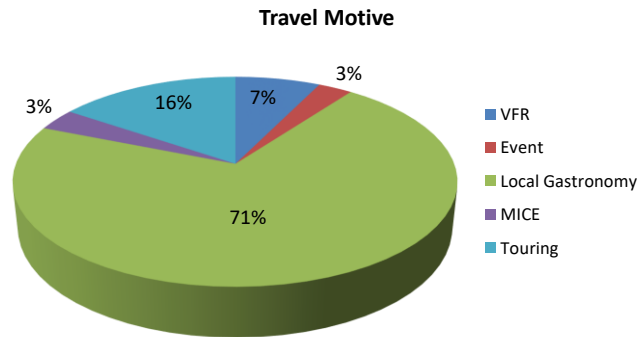


Source: author



Sources: C. M. Mealhada

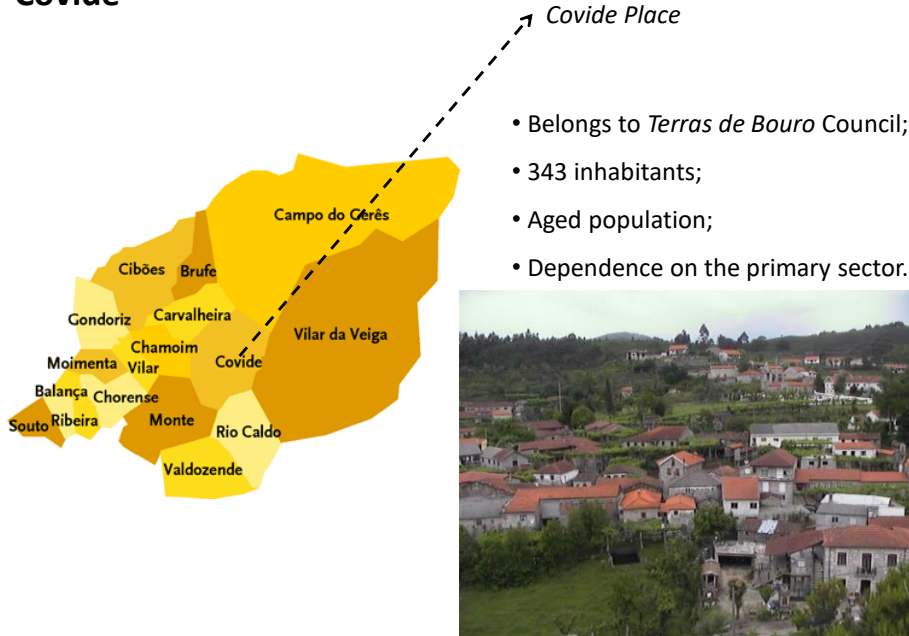
- Study developed in 2007;
- Sample N=206;
- Gastronomy is the main attraction of Mealhada, the primary motive of visitors displacement;



Some Considerations Regarding the study

- This study demonstrates that the gastronomy may be in fact the main tourist attraction of a destination;
- Gastronomic tourists seek good gastronomy; quality; good service and Authenticity;
- The fact of 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;
- More than 800 families work in something related with the main attraction but there's a very few qualified workers;
- 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.

Covide



- Belongs to *Terras de Bouro* Council;
- 343 inhabitants;
- Aged population;
- Dependence on the primary sector.



Source: Calcedonia Foundation

Study developed by the supply side, with participant observation and bibliographic research



- In 1996 arises in Covide the *Calcedonia Foundation for Rural Development*;
- It is a case of successful entrepreneurship;
- The Foundation is devoted to preserve the local resources and the cultural legacy, giving a special emphasis to the rural gastronomy;
- Supports the sale of local agricultural products and has its own production;
- Concerning the sale of the products, main customers are the visitors to the region – strong connection to the tourism.

Calcedónia Foundation Activities based on Local Products and Gastronomy



Source: Author and Calcedonia Foundation



Source: Author



Source: Author and Calcedonia Foundation

Some Positive Achievements and Impacts of the Foundation Work and the Tourism Connection

- Covide gained notoriety and is no longer just a passing place on the way to the National Park;
- Tourism was developed and is now a reality;
- The restaurant has an high demand and appear on several tourism guides where get excellent reviews;
- There are visitors traveling to Covide, purposely to practice gastronomic tourism;
- The rural lodging occupancy has grown;
- Jobs have been created;
- Effective combat against rural emigration;
- Valorization of local products;
- Cultural traditions preservation;
- ...



Final Considerations

- Through the three case studies presented it is verified that gastronomy can be in fact a tourist attraction of a destination;
- In some extreme cases like Mealhada, gastronomy can be the main attraction but generally is a secondary or complementary attraction;
- Rural places should potentiate its gastronomy because they have what visitors that travel with gastronomic purposes want, namely good gastronomy; quality; and Authenticity;
- Through entrepreneurship, in rural places, it is possible to create several offers related with gastronomy that can be of interest to all kinds of tourists, like rural restaurants, visit to farms, rural shops, gastronomic routes, etc.;
- The “crossing” of gastronomy and tourism, supported by local authorities and particulars, leads to a sustainable development that can and should be used by the “rural world”.

