Promoting Sustainability through Regional Food and Wine Pairing

Subjects: Others

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Sustainable development has been growingly recognized as important in the scope of tourism and hospitality industry practices. Gastronomic tourism associated with regional food-and wine pairing helps the emerging of higher quality services and contributes to the sustainability of tourist destinations.

Algarve   regional food and wine   pairing model   food pairing   Real-Time Delphi

sustainability promotion   gastronomic tourism   sustainable development

1. Introduction

Tourism has an important role in sustainable development in many countries and regions worldwide [1][2][3]. As many studies point out, by respecting the principles of sustainable development [1], food tourism and the tourism industry can play significant roles in developing a tourist destination (e.g., [4][5][6][7][8][9][10])—namely, providing new job opportunities, strengthening the cultural identity [8], contributing to the growth and welfare of its residents, and also using local resources and promoting visitor satisfaction [11], as it is linked to the culinary experience's lasting memory [12][13]. Consequently, food and wine pairing should be developed, as it potentiates the emerging of higher quality services and contributes to the sustainability of these destinations [14].

Delphi is a popular method in the scholarly literature and was used more than 2600 times between 1975 and 2017, 175 times in scholarly articles in business and management, 43 times in leisure and tourism [15], etc. Schwark et al. [16] also used Delphi to study foods. Real et al. [17] used Delphi to present a new model for the Mediterranean diet definition and identify the major trends for using the Mediterranean diet concept by 2028 in Portugal.

The resulting pairing model of regional food and wines was communicated to tourism professionals and the general public and can be used as a pedagogical tool. With the information of these pairings and promoting their consumption, the researchers expect to promote an efficient, socially fair, and ecologically sustainable local economy in a "sun-and-beach" touristic destination.

2. Gastronomy Tourism as an Enhancer of Sustainable Development

Gastronomic tourism should be understood in the scope of the growing recognition of the culture and tourism sectors' contribution to achieving the sustainable development goals (SDGs) of the Agenda 2030 [18]. The Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development [19] is based on three highly interdependent main dimensions—economic, social, environmental —that "require holistic approaches to policies, given positive synergies across all dimensions" [18]. The integration of a

cultural dimension in sustainable development is seen as contributing mainly "to the implementation of SDGs 4, 8, and 17" [18]. It also presents as evidence its links with creativity, innovation, networks creation, high participation of stakeholders and communities, etc. [18].

Regarding tourism, as a driver and enabler of sustainability, some international policy documents stand out, such as "Tourism and the Sustainable Development Goals—Journey to 2030—Highlights" [1] and the "Baseline Report on the Integration of Sustainable Consumption and Production Patterns into Tourism Policies" [2]. Among its recommendations, a set of priorities are underlined—namely, the "integration of sustainable tourism in national policy-making and development planning institutions, as well as policy coherence and integration across inter-linked sectors" [2]. This principle should be conducted in the scope of "business operations", "host community support", "supplier relations", "customer service" and "stakeholder involvement" [1].

Gastronomy, as intangible or "living" heritage [20], is an expression of "popular" and "everyday" culture, associated with the consumption and enjoyment of good food and drinks [5]. As Visković and Komac [21] emphasized, according to many other authors, "from a heritage perspective, gastronomy is a mixture of tangible and intangible elements, that embodies the values and meanings of heritage bearers represents their cultural identity". Underlining the importance of identity studies associated with gastronomy, Di Fiore [22] points out some significant research, such as studies about the symbolic and identity meanings of food for different social classes, the eating habits of different economic classes, profiles linked to working in the food system, as well as food heritages linked to religion, gender dynamics, different generational identities, etc.

Heritage could not be "fixed" as it is in a "continuous evolution" [23]. It enhances the need to consider the specific characteristics of each culture and its protagonists [24] as well as its values. Heritage is based on two primary values—historical and contemporary [25]. The first is associated with "heritage". The second underlines the fact that a living heritage should be considered in a future context, based on the assumption that heritage is in a "continuous recreation" [25], being regularly reproduced and reinvented [22]. In accordance, Bienassis [26] highlights that food is an identity heritage that results from appropriation dynamics fomented by specific groups, communities, and societies.

As a segment of cultural tourism, gastronomic tourism is a new form of tourism [27]. Accordingly, the researchers can find several terms associated with food-based tourism, such as culinary tourism, tasting tourism, gastronomy tourism, food tourism, etc. [27]. This type of tourism is associated with visits to places based on food production and consumption. Simultaneously, there is a focus on preparation processes or eating a special dish and seeing how it is prepared [21]. Gastronomic tourism can be experienced in live cooking schools, traditional gastronomic feats and celebrations, grape harvesting, visiting regional wineries and food producers, etc. [27].

Gastronomic tourism, in the scope of a gastronomy "patrimonialization" [24], "heritagization" [6] or "heritage turn" [22] process, raises concerns due to the increasing heritage commodification or mercantilization [24], as well as the invention of heritage ("invented heritage") [22]. The understanding, interpretation, and usage of heritage by tourism highlight the role of a localized cultural heritage as an important distinguishing factor between regions [21]. From a geographical perspective, food is a tourist symbol of a place [21], and consequently, different places have different forms of cultural identity.

As a territorial attribute, gastronomy is associated with identity [28] and, consequently, is perceived as an economically valuable asset, especially when integrated with creative industries [28]. Space is shaped and structured by gastronomy,

mainly due to changes in social and economic structures, as well as land use [21]. The Food Travel Monitor market research report states, "53% of leisure travelers choose their next destination because of food and drink" [29]. Consequently, the "gastro-economy", i.e., "developing economy with gastronomy" [30], is recognized as an emerging phenomenon and a vital sub-sector of the tourism economies with a strong potential for regional, urban, and rural development. Gastronomy allows the growth of domestic and international tourism, the transformation of national food products into exported goods, and the branding of cities as gastronomy destinations, contributing to global economic development [30].

Many authors suggested that destinations with the best chances for developing a gastronomic tourism product/experience are those that already have the advantageous "dishes" and "ingredients" to support a tourism strategy [31] based on their uniqueness. Such resources include different or multi-ethnic gastronomy, innovative chefs, unique marine and agricultural products, unique culinary heritage [31].

This distinctiveness in the scope of the interconnection between "gastronomic identity" [7] and the development and formation of a national [22] or regional identity [8] is frequently associated with a gastronomic tourist region—a "touriscape" [32] or to "foodscape" [7]. This association considers the territorialization of gastronomy [9] in the scope of "traditional", "authentic" [22], and "unique" [27] gastronomic tourist products or experiences. Celebrating and fostering authenticity and the relationship between production and places contests global food homogenization potentiating local culture enjoyment [31]. However, once territory is a "complex construct" in which different stakeholders (residents, visitors, investors) enhance different perspectives, motivations, knowledge, experiences, and expectations, it is challenging to understand the historic mechanisms expressed in heritage that can be used as a resource for territorial development [21].

3. Food and Wine Pairing in the Context of Gastronomic Tourism Regional Development

Gastronomic tourism should be associated with the new cultural and creative value chain. In this context, the pairing of food and wine should be understood based on an anchored network "with creativity and innovation", where gastronomy extends from the production phase to the consuming phase, a process in which new ideas and inspiration emerge [33].

It is worth underlining that academic research on food and drink pairing is taking its first steps, thus calling for more empirical studies—namely, the investigation of key drivers of perceiving matches of food and wine [34]. Although over the last two decades, interest in food and drink pairing has grown in restaurants, books, magazines, blogs, and television, associated with the increasing popularity of food and wine pairing in the general press, limited scientific studies have been published to evaluate relationships empirically. [34]. Harrington and Seo [34] highlight the fact that the research of food and wine relationships has mostly centered on wine and cheese pairings, with a few studies assessing other foods paired with wine or the resulting sensory outcomes when certain foods interact with specific wines.

However, food and wine pairing have been capturing more and more researchers' attention, presenting as evidence its strong synergic interaction [35]. According to Wang [36], throughout human history, the main reason for drinking wine with meals was the enjoyment created from this combination. Flavors in food can suppress or accentuate particular characteristics in wine, altering the experience of that wine and vice versa [36]. Good food and wine pairing will increase the flavors of both the food and the wine, and a great pairing happens when they do not overshadow each other. Wine is an "ideal complement to the food, and it raises up the taste of food to the highest level" [13]. Enology and gastronomy are

closely connected, enhancing a better customer experience [13]. This synergetic dimension is also linked with the territory. As Colet [37] underlines, "if they grow in the same place, they are a good match."

Beyond the synergistic nature of pairing, Eschevins et al. [38] evince the importance of pairing principles corresponding to strategies and prerequisites to create a match. According to the mentioned authors, these principles are related to "perceptual" (balance of intensity, balance of quality, harmony, similarity, culinary practices, avoiding off-flavor, rinsing effect, decrease in sensory property, enhancement of sensory property), "conceptual" (norms, geographical identity, quality level, moment of the meal, situation specific, season), "affective" (individual preferences, surprise) and "other" (experience) categories and aim at creating pairing according to various objectives: creating a unique match experience, highlighting one of the two products, and enjoying the experience of each product in the pair [38]. In this framework, other approaches stand out in the wine and food pairing training process based on culinary and sensory perspectives. It illustrates the potential of using a hierarchical approach to pairing [39][40]. The sensorial approaches are associated with food and pairing evocating emotions [41]. Specific sensory attributes, such as odors, are linked with memories and emotions [36]. The phenomenon is known as the "Proustian moment" [42].

Due to the diversity of food-beverage pairing principles, Spence [43] suggested they can be reduced to just two approaches based on cognitive/intellectual food–beverage matching, and the other based on the perceptual consequences pairing. As a result of this simplification, those interested in presenting flavor pairings should be able to do so more easily to their customers, so they can deal with what, at times, seems to be a complex area [43]. Food and wine pairing is frequently perceived as an enhancer of creativity and innovation through identity and authenticity reinforcement, differentiation and marketing, profit and revenue generation, sustainability development model and positive social and economic impacts, and improvement of tourist experiences.

Pairing, as a tool for defining a region's gastronomic identity and reinforcing it, assumes that this identity is determined by specific territorial interconnected elements—namely, environmental (geography and climate), cultural (religions, history, level of ethnic diversity, innovations, capabilities, traditions, beliefs, and values) and economic (dependency of tourism) [44]. This interconnection leads to unique food and wine pairings across different local/regions associated with their identifiable gastronomic characteristics.

Accordingly, the concept of "geographical identity" [38] emerges. It consists of matching two products from the same area, region, or country. As Eschevins et al. [38] state, the researchers evoke the designation of origin that reflects a region. When the researchers have regions with gastronomic typicality, the researchers are speaking about a local pairing, considering the products available in this region. In the culinary literature, this could be better identified considering the "terroir" pairings or traditional practices [38], presenting as evidence the food–territory–tourism triangle [21].

The geographical identity should be understood in a dynamic context, as regional identity and associated pairings are in continuous transformation or evolution [7], along with the reinforcement of creativity and innovation, gastronomies are constantly changing. They are a combination of different products, traditions, and etiquette [44].

Creativity and innovation linked to pairing show the subjectivity of the "combination" considering the specificity of the identifying characteristics of each territory. This identification, in turn, leads to networks associated with new stakeholders and new entrepreneurship forms [9]. From a supply side, this presupposes both the creativity in proposing new food

products and the innovation in contemporary (gastronomy) tourism that tends to be seen more and more significant in local/regional tourism development.

The territorial nature of pairing—embodied in the concept of "terroir identity"—shows a strong relationship to the overall branding, associated with differentiation and marketing strategies as a sign of "terroir", "typicity", "traditionalism", "identity" [36], in opposition with a globalized world [45]. Pairing is seen as a companies' (restaurants, hotels, and similar) strategy of differentiation [13] and "food distinctiveness to consumers" [46]. In this context, companies should enhance efforts in including local/regional ingredients, dishes, and wine, creating unique menus and pairings potentiating its production growth.

Pairing as a marketing, promotional, or recommended strategy is also underlined once it can "encourage more food and wine consumption, especially for newcomers and outsiders" [47]. "Food and wine pairing as a marketing tool" [11] is frequently associated with concepts such as brands, co-branding, brand reputation [11], brand authenticity [48], etc. These considerations also highlight pairing as a driver of the establishment's "reputation" [36] and as a "helpful measure to professionals in the hospitality business in sourcing and recommending wines to customers" [11][47].

Simultaneously, pairing represents an "innovative and profitable strategy for the hospitality and wine sectors to meet consumers' demands", providing opportunities to create further profit for hospitality operators [11]. Accordingly, pairing is perceived as a strategy to generate revenue, profit [11][13], and sales [49].

4. Pairing and Sustainable Development Models

Pairing could enhance more sustainable development models. The relationship between gastronomy and sustainable tourism is frequently underlined, particularly associated with local traditions and culture, agriculture and food/beverage, processing fields, excellent tourism portals, and being tourist-friendly [50]. From this framework, gastronomic tourism can support the development of local tourism by stimulating local culture, producing different products respecting specialties, encouraging the production of food ingredients, increasing cooperation between sectors, and adapting to the times [5]. As Putra [5] points out, it is also essential to incentivize visitors to participate in cultural life, which has been provided in the tourist area. Food and local products are used to describe and interpret culture [5].

The assumption is that sustainability could be achieved by reinforcing a more holistic and integrational perspective. Through pairing, sectoral, territorial, and intra- and inter-group integration could be enhanced. Paring reinforces sectoral integration, between the food and wine sectors (wine enology and wine business) [47] but also in the tourism sector, etc. According to Rachão et al. [28], when the demand for local food and wine rises, the demand for raw materials rises as well and then provides more job opportunities for locals. Additionally, local resources will supply local food and wine production [28].

Territorial integration of food and wine production systems (in intra- and inter-urban and rural areas) could build socio-economic cohesion based on local or regional values. For the same reason, tourism strategies of destinations promote and encourage the development of integrated tourism products rather than simple ones [21].

Intra- and inter-group integration is based on networks [12]. Stakeholder networking is crucial for pairing to thrive. Local actors and outsiders compete for limited local resources to serve visitors and their own interests. As a result, new forms of

clustering and networking emerge [51]. Due to the described development from local to globally influenced local service, tourism products, including gastronomy products, are becoming more complex. Gastronomy tourism may reduce distances that have increased due to the globalization of agricultural food supply chains by involving local actors involved in the food system, such as farmers, producers and processors, chefs and caterers, festival organizers and managers, policymakers, authorities, and the community [21].

Respect for sustainable principles leads to avoiding potential development negative impacts in territories and communities. Local sourcing is a key tool to promote local agricultural landscape protection as well as to prevent higher prices, water and energy saving, local enterprises responsible investment, local recruitment, local supplier prosperity, host community involvement, etc. [1].

Since competitivity should be synergetic with sustainable development, tourist destinations will compete to attract the attention of tourists with food and wine, as well as with its pairing. Successful tourist destinations provide higher levels of service and quality of "iconic" tourism products and experiences [52]. Creating "iconic" tourism products requires more knowledge from the supply and demand sides.

Pairing also boosts sustainable development, creating "a more rounded gastronomical experience" in the post-Fordist society. More responsible, respectful of places, and environmentally conscientious tourists leads to an increasing consumption concern with questions such as "where their food comes from and how it is produced, and transparency in the handling of food is becoming increasingly important" [16]. Based on Schwark et al. [16], several studies have shown that individuals prefer locally grown foods due to their freshness, familiar taste, and sustainability, as long-distance transportation is not necessary [16]. Furthermore, tourists eating and drinking local food and wine are indirectly reducing the carbon footprint, which is an environmental repercussion of food being distributed around the world using polluting modes of transportation [10].

Pairing increases "wine consumers' satisfaction" [16][39][47][49] and qualifies "the eating experience" [12][13], usually associated with the enhancement of emotions that valorizes the consumer experience [11] and co-creative experiences [53]. The experiential nature of pairing should be seen in its interconnection between "sensory qualities of food and wine pairings and pre-, core-, and post-consumption components of the gastronomic experience" [11]. According to Kustos et al. [11], appropriate pairings elicited more positive and fewer negative emotions, demonstrating consumers' emotional engagement, which is an important aspect of creating unforgettable experiences. Unconventional pairings provoked adventurous and surprising emotional experiences, as well as positive hedonic comments, which also suggests a possible approach for hospitality and cellar door operators to develop a favorable customer experience [11]. In the "post-consumption experience", consumers retained vivid memories and reported higher remembered liking, memorability, and loyalty of experiences for the appropriate pairings.

In addition, tourists perceive co-creation as one or a combination of seven categories: social interaction, novelty, creativity, social sustainability, environmental awareness, enjoyment, and memorable experiences [28]. This was considered in rural (e.g., [46]) and urban spaces (e.g., [53]).

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