Local food consumption: distinct patterns of consumption and associated meanings amongst Portuguese rural tourists

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Aims

- clarify **local food consumption patterns** amongst Portuguese visitors of rural areas,

- distinguishing **groups of consumers** surveyed in 2014 in the context of a 3-years research project, based on motivations for this type of food consumption
Rural territories: increasingly attract tourists, due to appealing and distinctive experience opportunities based on varied endogenous resources - “countryside capital” (Garrod, et al, 2006), highly valued by the post-modern tourist (Kastenholz, Carneiro & Marques, 2012; Lane, 2007).

Within this rural tourism experience context, local food stands out (Sidali et al 2013), also frequently, eventually excessively, used in promotional material (Figueiredo, 2013).

Local food is linked to the ideal of safer and healthier food consumption, associated to authenticity, local culture and identity.

The consumption of these products after the trip is a means of enjoying a prolonged tourist experience at home (Aho, 2001; Kastenholz et al 2014).
Theoretical background

- Local food is a broad category, including agriculture produce, manufactured and refined products; with distinct ingredients, flavors and associated cultural meanings.

- Its consumption may occur in distinct contexts - at the destination and at home, integrated in tourism services or sold in shops.

- Rural tourists are heterogeneous, with different motivations, travel behaviors, demographics and impacts produced.

- Also the market of local food is heterogeneous.

- An understanding of this heterogeneity should improve sustainable destination management.
Methodology

- A questionnaire directed to a sample of the Portuguese population aged 14+
- A total of 1839 valid questionnaires were obtained (59.8% - personal interviews / 40.2% online)
- A quota sampling approach was adopted based on the following criteria:
  - The municipality of residence categorized in three levels:
    - level 1 municipalities – mostly urban;
    - level 2 municipalities – intermediate
    - and level 3 municipalities – mostly rural
  - The parish of residence (categorized in two groups – urban or rural, according to INE classification)
  - Gender
  - Age
Methodology

In this study only the respondents who had:

a) visited a Portuguese rural area in the last three years with tourism purposes
b) and who simultaneously indicated consumption of locally produced food items, with known origin from rural areas, were considered

A total of 610 questionnaires were used for this analysis (32.9%)

3 clusters resulted, which were subject to Chi-square tests to assess differences between them regarding travel behavior, link to rural areas, type of local products consumed and socio-demographics.

To assess heterogeneity within this market regarding consumption patterns of local food products, the main reasons for this consumption were introduced in a hierarchical cluster analysis.
Clusters identified:

Cluster 1 – (25% of the sample)

Cluster 2 – (42% of the sample)

Cluster 3 – (33% of the sample)
# Results

### Main reasons for consuming food items produced in rural areas

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reasons</th>
<th>Cluster 1 (25%)</th>
<th>Cluster 2 (42%)</th>
<th>Cluster 3 (33%)</th>
<th>Total (100%)</th>
<th>( \chi^2 (\alpha) )</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Being healthier</td>
<td>41.8</td>
<td>33.5</td>
<td>58.1</td>
<td>43.8</td>
<td>29.198 (0.000)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Having better flavor</td>
<td>24.2</td>
<td><strong>84.3</strong></td>
<td>4.4</td>
<td>42.6</td>
<td>322.321 (0.000)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Being more reliable</td>
<td><strong>100.0</strong></td>
<td>1.2</td>
<td>10.8</td>
<td>29.2</td>
<td>500.734 (0.000)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supporting local producers</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td><strong>24.8</strong></td>
<td><strong>27.6</strong></td>
<td>19.5</td>
<td>50.053 (0.000)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Being biologic</td>
<td>11.1</td>
<td>8.7</td>
<td><strong>30.5</strong></td>
<td>16.6</td>
<td>250.587 (0.000)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Being national</td>
<td>8.5</td>
<td><strong>32.7</strong></td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>16.1</td>
<td>92.714 (0.000)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Being produced by relatives</td>
<td>9.2</td>
<td>11.4</td>
<td><strong>16.7</strong></td>
<td>12.6</td>
<td>5.141 (0.077)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Being cheaper</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>1.2</td>
<td><strong>12.8</strong></td>
<td>4.8</td>
<td>43.877 (0.000)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Being produced by themselves</td>
<td>2.0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td><strong>9.9</strong></td>
<td>3.8</td>
<td>32.027 (0.000)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Having better appearance</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>1.2</td>
<td><strong>7.9</strong></td>
<td>3.1</td>
<td>23.352 (0.000)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Main socio-demographic differences:
• Cluster 1 tends to be older, cluster 3 younger
• Cluster 2 tends to be higher educated

Differences regarding link to the rural:
• All tend to be rather urban, in some respects cluster 3 a bit more (but no statistically significant differences)
Some differences between clusters regarding preferences of specific products:

- Cluster 1 tends to like, more than others, products from animal origin, meat based products.
- Cluster 2 tends to like, more than others, processed products, particularly wine, cheese, but also bread.
- Cluster 3 tends to like, more than others, agriculture produce, particularly vegetables, potatoes, but also eggs.
Some differences between clusters regarding tourism activities undertaken:

- All frequently refer to (>60%) resting, appreciating scenery, contacting nature, visiting historical/ traditional villages and tasting local cuisine.
- Cluster 1 tends to refer, more than others, to resting, tasting local cuisine and visiting relatives.
- Cluster 2 tends to refer, more than others, to visiting historical/ traditional villages, monuments, museums and protected areas.
- Cluster 3 tends to refer to sports activities, more than others (although not a dominant theme either).
Conclusions

- Understanding this market heterogeneity regarding food consumption for those actually visiting rural areas for tourism purposes may help improve marketing, particularly product development and market communication, directed to diverse types of visitors of rural areas.

- Similar studies in other national contexts would be interesting for comparison.

- More, also qualitative research may be undertaken to better understand the role of local food consumption in the tourist experience on-site and also after the trip (e.g. also questioning the role of shared consumption and cultural meanings of particular local food items).
Thank you!
Obrigada!

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