

Place-Linked Products and Creative Tourism in Iberian Regions



Celso Lopes, João Leitão, and Juan Rengifo Gallego

Abstract Local agri-food products are one of the most important differentiating assets of the rural territories of Portugal and Spain. They are often considered part of the representative cultural capital of their home territories, country, society and history. They are also a tourist resource, with the potential to promote creative tourism activities that offer visitors the opportunity to develop their creative potential, through active participation in courses and learning experiences specific to the destination where they take place.

This chapter aims to understand to what extent local agri-food products serve as a brand of their places of origin and local drivers of creative tourism. To this end, four regional agri-food products were taken as case studies, together with their places of origin in Portugal and Spain: *Cereja do Fundão* (Cherries of Fundão) and *Queijo Serra da Estrela* (Serra da Estrela cheese) from the Portuguese Central Region, and *Cereza del Jerte* (Cherries from Jerte) and *Torta del Casar* (Torta del Casar cheese) from Spanish Extremadura.

The research focuses on the communication channels used most by local, municipal, supra-municipal or regional public and private entities, whose scope of activity includes the promotion and valorisation of tourism, namely their official websites and Facebook pages. The qualitative and quantitative exploratory method was used to achieve the objective defined. After completing an exhaustive database of entities,

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as a data collection procedure, differentiated content analysis was carried out, through metrics created and applied to websites and Facebook pages.

This investigation revealed that the four agri-food products studied are catalysts for tourism activities and events in their places of origin. These products are also drivers of a range of creative tourism activities.

1 Introduction

Agriculture is one of the oldest sectors of activity in the global economy, aiming to meet a series of basic needs linked to the subsistence and development of different peoples. In turn, tourism is one of the economic activities with the greatest and fastest expansion, based on international mobility. Given the global problems related to climate change, food shortages, increased food prices, financial crises and, more recently, public health crises, the link between agriculture and tourism should be prioritised as a way to search actively for new solutions for countries' sustainable development.

However, major challenges arise in strengthening this link. First of all, greater understanding of the processes of restructuring the rural world and the new, principally social and environmental, functions of agriculture, and secondly, understanding of the multiple dimensions of tourism and its development (Torres & Momsen, 2011).

In the agricultural and agri-food sector, regional and local agri-food products are some of the most important differentiating assets of rural parts of Portugal and Spain (Cava-Jiménez et al., 2019; Folgado-Fernández et al., 2017; Rodrigo et al., 2015; Tibério, 1998). For this reason, they are frequently considered as part of the representative cultural capital, not only of their places of origin but even of the country, its society and history (Richards, 2014). Some examples are *Vinho do Porto* (port) and *Pêra Rocha* (pears) in Portugal or *Jamón Ibérico* (ham) and *Queso Manchego* (cheese) in Spain.

So it is not surprising that these products have the potential to bring social and economic benefits for their places, regions or countries of origin, besides their producers and commercial agents. Consequently, these products are also a tourism resource, and currently a wide range of tourist activities is stimulated mainly by elements related to agriculture and the rural world (Armesto-López & Gómez-Martín, 2006). Recognising this potential, in many places a growing number of authorities and policy-makers identify the development of creative agri-food product clusters as a way to stimulate the creative economy and the tourist industry (Lee et al., 2015; OECD, 2014; Richards & Raymond, 2000).

The expansion of this type of tourism promotes the emergence of creative tourism activities, i.e., a type of tourism that gives visitors the opportunity to develop their creative potential through active participation in courses and/or learning experiences associated with the place they are held in (Richards & Raymond, 2000).

The study presented in this chapter is part of wider research aiming to understand the impact of regional agri-food products of differentiated quality (with PDO, GPI and TSG certifications) on the sustainable development of their places of origin. Following this line, the main objective of this study is to understand to what extent regional agri-food products are considered tourism assets in their places of origin and encourage creative tourism initiatives.

The research focuses on four regional agri-food products from two neighbouring border regions in Portugal and Spain: *Cereja do Fundão* (cherries) and *Queijo Serra da Estrela* (cheese) from the Central Region of Portugal, and *Cereza del Jerte* (cherries) and *Torta del Casar* (cheese) from the province of Cáceres in Extremadura, Spain. The analysis is of the territories of production, more precisely, the tourist initiatives related to these products announced on websites and Facebook by local bodies with responsibilities for promoting and publicising tourist activities, and mainly creative tourism initiatives.

Following the introduction, there is a review of the literature on some of the main concepts related to use of the internet as a means to promote rural areas with quality agri-food products, the role of creativity and creative tourism in rural areas and the potential of using agri-food products as the reason for holding creative tourism initiatives. This section ends with formulation of the research hypotheses and a proposed conceptual model, which will be used to organise, explain and discuss the results of the research. Then the empirical study is presented, followed by discussion of the main results obtained. Finally, the conclusions are presented, together with the limitations and suggestions for future research.

2 Literature Review

2.1 *ICT and Promotion of Territories with Agri-Food Products*

In recent years, the commercialisation of tourist products, destinations and services has undergone important changes in trends, mainly due to the development and application of communication processes (Jiménez Morales & de San Eugenio Vela, 2009). This strengthens the idea that information and communication technology (ICT), and more specifically, the internet, has played a fundamental role in stimulating the leisure industry (Piñeiro-Naval & Serra, 2018). These means of communication are currently essential tools to promote and publicise tourist destinations (Túñez López et al., 2016), and are prioritised by entities with responsibility in this area (Cafiero et al., 2020).

A recent report from Eurostat about the use of ICT in tourism demonstrates that 40% of Europeans use the internet to look for information related to travel (Eurostat, 2016). In addition, the internet is the main source used by tourists who intend to explore less conventional destinations (Cafiero et al., 2020).

On the one hand, the development of ICT, and particularly the internet, gave the “new” tourist the power to become an expert in seeking exceptional value for their money and time (Piñeiro-Naval & Serra, 2018). New tourists are less interested in following the crowd and much keener to follow their own preferences and timetable (Buhalis & Law, 2008). On the other hand, the internet allows organisations with responsibilities for promoting tourism, obviously including local authorities, to develop a broad informative structure. This structure can cover all the topics, places and actors in the territory; from its history and heritage to basic information about accommodation and eating out (de Moragas Spà, 2015). That is how, in the local context, the entities that publish information, consciously or unconsciously, create a certain image of a place. They act as an antenna broadcasting concepts, attributes, values, impressions, sensations and visual impacts that form a place’s image (Jiménez Morales & de San Eugenio Vela, 2009).

Therefore, websites have become a very relevant element of organisations’ communication, particularly for local authorities, considerably modifying the way of spreading information and relating to their publics (Cabeceiro et al., 2019). Through this channel, local authorities and regional tourism organisations try to attract potential visitors by building an attractive leisure and cultural provision (Piñeiro-Naval & Serra, 2018). This communication tool helps a destination’s managers to attract tourists to their area, based on information, establishing a dialogue between the parties involved or systematisation of the tourist service provision, and including access to hyperlinks to hotels and tourism operators (Alencar de Farias et al., 2011).

Another communication channel much used by local entities to promote tourism in their areas is Facebook (Cabeceiro et al., 2019). Unlike municipal websites, where access requires more effort by potential tourists, Facebook pages are more visible and accessible (Lev-On & Steinfeld, 2015).

Local authorities’ use of the Facebook environment and complexity has shown continuous, incremental improvement (Deakin, 2010; Mossberger et al., 2013; Oliveira & Welch, 2013). Consequently, it has become an essential means of communication between local authorities and residents in Europe and the USA (Bonsón et al., 2012; Norris & Reddick, 2013).

Due to the great potential related to the speed of conveying messages, the capacity to spread information and mainly the ease of access, both the websites and Facebook pages of local entities with responsibilities in promoting tourism are tools of destination marketing, and as such, must be well managed, in order to create sustainable competitive advantages for destinations in the competitive scenario of global tourism (Pike & Page, 2014).

The major boom in world tourism in recent years is due to a wide set of factors. Piñeiro-Naval and Serra (2018) have no hesitation in pointing out the use of ICT as one of the main factors, as this has allowed tourists to plan their journeys and select their leisure experiences autonomously, based on their own interests and motivations.

2.2 *Creativity and Creative Tourism in Rural Areas*

Professionals in creative areas are located in places where they can benefit from technology, talent and tolerance (Florida, 2003). So it is not surprising that creativity continues to be a concept associated with urban life, since its main source of economic growth, creative people, live and work in cities (Jarábková & Hamada, 2012).

Creativity is therefore an extremely important element of knowledge-based economies (OECD, 2014). This, together with competences, has become central to creating value in the economy as a whole (Richards, 2011), and so creative industries in particular have become a significant economic, cultural and social force. They promote growth and employment, contribute to innovation, entrepreneurship and the development of competences, support urban and rural renewal, stimulate exports, help to maintain cultural identity and increase cultural diversity (OECD, 2014). Therefore, as highlighted by Richards (2011), creativity has been widely applied to tourist facilities such as “design hotels”, iconic museums, art galleries and even vineyards.

Becoming aware of this opportunity, many rural areas have redefined themselves as places for consumption, where the commercial possibilities of nature, heritage and traditions have joined agricultural production as key elements of such areas. This leads to the question of the impacts, if any, of this “*creative turn*” on reproduction of the rural area (Clope, 2007). Creativity can be a response to the social and economic viability of rural areas (Roberts & Townsend, 2016). Creative individuals and creative communities contribute to building cultural capital in the rural world and to their communities’ resilience (Gibson & Gordon, 2018; Roberts & Townsend, 2016). Cultural and creative practices express identity and social cohesion, contributing to the quality of life of people living in rural areas (Cabeça et al., 2020).

A strong awareness of the resources available in the community, together with the sense of community (Roberts & Townsend, 2016), plays a fundamental role in developing future paths of sustainable development, besides allowing local communities to develop the capacity to adapt to changes observed in their environment (Cabeça et al., 2020).

The growing articulation between tourism and creativity has been stimulated by the search for alternative models of tourism development and the expansion of the creative economy (Long & Morphet, 2016; OECD, 2014). Consequently, associating creativity with tourism has become a common diversification strategy, principally in the field of cultural tourism, leading to the development of new events and festivals, restoration of old buildings or animation of static attractions being everyday activities nowadays (Richards, 2020). Today, different places, areas, regions and even countries seek rapid ways to differentiate themselves in the global economy, leading them to direct their attention to the creative industries (Turok, 2009).

Cabeça et al. (2020) mention various studies by specialists in the area of tourism, which indicate the emergence of new trends and a change in how people plan and find their destinations. According to these studies, today, a great many tourists seek

usefulness rather than novelty, leading them to plan their trips according to the desire for personal growth (Tan et al., 2013). This type of tourist tends to seek authenticity, interaction, cultural immersion, unique experiences, traditional crafts and knowledge (Ohridska-Olson & Ivanov, 2010), wishing to partake in a service that provides them with memorable experiences (Ferreira et al., 2018), involving them deeply in the areas they visit and participating actively in activities that involve the local community (Cabeça et al., 2020).

Tourists are more aware of, and sensitive to the context, and so give more value to the culture of the place and the feeling of being in special, unique destinations (Moscardo, 1996). This means giving greater value to emotional aspects (Jensen, 1999), as well as the possibility of having unique experiences characteristic of a certain place which cannot be reproduced elsewhere (Gu & Ryan, 2008). This type of tourist seeks memorable events (Pine & Gilmore, 1999), engaging experiences (Richards, 2016) and co-created experiences that involve local communities and arouse their creativity (Richards, 2010).

Responding to the psychological needs expressed by this type of tourist, such as inspiration and creativity (Binkhorst, 2008), requires a change of perspective (Cohen & Cohen, 2012), as more than observing, they want to become involved, learn, intervene and experience (Cabeça et al., 2020). The territorial assets of a given destination and the different activities it can provide are therefore increasingly important at the time of deciding on a destination (Martin & Woodside, 2008).

As a result, creative tourism can be a response to this new paradigm, since it depends on the tourist's willingness to engage in learning activities connected to the art, heritage and culture of a destination, based on interaction with the local community (Cabeça et al., 2020). In truth, this is a new form of tourism, which assumes a link between visitors and residents in the same experience (UNESCO, 2006), giving each visitor the opportunity to develop their creative potential and learn, through active participation in the experiences characterising the destination (Richards & Raymond, 2000). Tourists and residents are involved in creative experiences in which both play active roles. Tourists learn, participate, interact and experience the daily life of the destination (Ilicic, 2013), while the resident becomes a key element of the tourist provision (Cabeça et al., 2020).

For Richards (2010), the main characteristics of creative tourism can be expressed as follows:

1. The development of creative potential: tourists need to be provided with the necessary tools to develop their creativity and so that when the time comes to return home they take more than just "souvenir".
2. The creation of active participation: tourists should be involved in the creative process. This promotes the generation of authentic exchange committed to the local population and culture.
3. The production of creative experiences: creativity can arise anywhere. What is important is the union between the creative process and the destination.

4. The development of co-creation: experiences can only be considered unique when tourists, besides interacting and participating, create, design, select and reflect on the experience.

As indicated by Cabeça et al. (2020), this type of tourism is inseparable from the places where it takes place, allying creativity to the places and providing unique cultural experiences. It requires the use of local resources and immersion in the culture of the destination.

Besides generating new cultural heritage (Ohridska-Olson & Ivanov, 2010), according to Richards (2001), creative tourism can potentialise a different type of value from that created by cultural tourism, aiming to differentiate destinations. This involves innovating destinations so as to create products more quickly, designing a process where renewable creative resources are also sustainable, and giving mobility to artistic shows or events, as the last-named can take place anywhere.

For all this to occur, it is enough for there to be a “place” which, in its broadest sense, includes the countryside and all its geographical, cultural (Hildreth & Bailey, 2014) and social specificities, as well as inter-connected institutions. The place serves as a source of inspiration to project distinct, creative tourist provision, with local resonance and meaning (Bakas et al., 2020), and in this sense, a rural territory is undoubtedly a unique place.

Creative tourism is therefore an experience of co-creation, which promotes the effective exchange of experiences, knowledge and competences. It provides the link between people and places, as well as between participants and experiences, valorises competences, knowledge, practices and creative avenues, simultaneously promoting investment in local potential, knowledge, competences and traditions.

2.3 Linking Local Agri-Food Products and Creative Tourist Activities

Regional agri-food products of recognised, differentiated quality and reputation are much more than mere agricultural products. Due to these differentiating characteristics, resulting from their strong connection to the land, they guarantee competitive advantage for their places of origin in a great variety of sectors and activities (Pacciani et al., 2001).

Conscious of this fact, through its quality policy, the European Union (EU), protects geographical indications (GI),¹ in order to promote the unique characteristics associated with geographical origin and traditional production methods (Belletti

¹GIs are defined by Article 22 of the Agreement on Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights Related to Commerce (TRIPS) as “. . . indications that identify produce as originating in the territory of a member, or a region or locality of that territory, where a certain quality, reputation or other characteristic of the product is essentially attributable to its geographic origin” (WTO, 1994). This definition suggests that GIs guarantee not only a product’s geographic origin but also some

et al., 2017; Cei et al., 2018; Tregear et al., 2007). In Europe, that quality usually refers to the presence of various factors in the place of origin (environmental and human), which are generally summed up in the French word *terroir* (Cei et al., 2018).

This type of product based on its origin is the result of a diversified set of technical, social and economic interactions that include the mobilisation of specific local resources, local know-how and cultural traditions and form the quality of the product within commercialisation chains, between producers and consumers (Belletti & Marescotti, 2011).

Beyond the strict and direct economic component, local and regional agri-food products can stimulate the emergence of other activities in their places of origin (Cei et al., 2018). Tourism is probably the best known example, through various initiatives such as wine trails and gastronomy (Gatti & Incerti, 1997; Millán-Vazquez de la Torre et al., 2017) or the supply of products and/or local dishes to agro-tourism structures (Sidali, 2011), being clearly linked to the presence of local food specialities. In addition, tourists, through activities related to the purchase and consumption in local specialised shops, grocers and restaurants, also represent an economic bonus for their places of origin (Bessièrè, 1998).

Therefore, local and regional agri-food products are also a tourism resource. Besides the increasing number of tourists who consciously seek new food experiences (Richards, 2012a), a growing number of tourists are willing to devote part of their money and free time to getting to know the world of wine, olive oil and other agri-food products. Their history, the landscape they belong to, their production methods and the people involved, besides visiting reserved spaces, oil presses, wine cellars or orchards (Millán-Vázquez de la Torre et al., 2013). Associating regional agri-food products with creative tourism initiatives can produce yet another interesting characteristic of creative tourism. Principally because, as stated by Richards (2014), these products combine different forms of culture: traditional culture, historical culture, popular culture, contemporary culture and mass culture. So they are another important advantage for peripheral areas, as preserving only the tradition is not enough to create vibrant communities.

These products can be the anchor for a diverse range of tourist experiences. Consequently, stimulating their development can be an attractive strategy, since this type of tourism is perceived as high-income tourism and can increase tourist expenditure (Bertella, 2011; Du Rand et al., 2003; Hall, 2012). Nevertheless, tourist activity, and particularly creative tourism initiatives related to local and regional agri-food products, and agricultural production in general, is still at a very early stage of research, with the literature on this topic being very limited.

A search of the literature on this subject quickly reveals there is not even a clear designation for this type of tourism. It usually emerges associated with food in

type of quality, which together with the product's reputation are essential conditions for GI protection (Lopes et al., 2018).

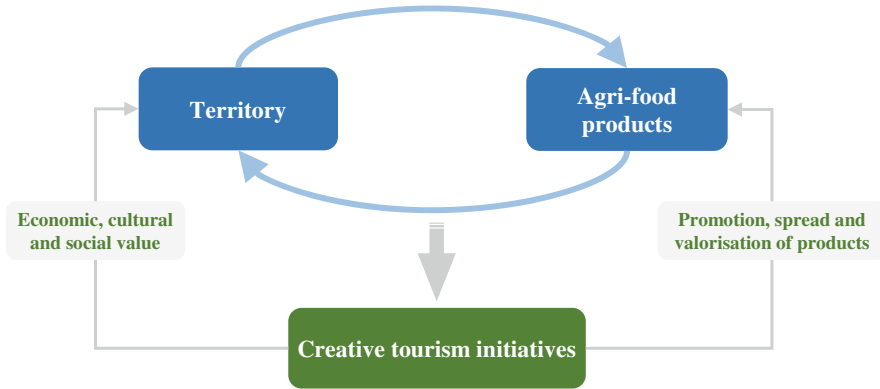


Fig. 1 Creative tourism initiatives based on the territory and agri-food products. Source: Own elaboration

general (Rachão et al., 2019) or gastronomy (Hjalager, 2002; Richards, 2012b, 2014).

From the above, it is logical to assume there is a synergistic relation between regional agri-food products and their places of origin, regarding the tourism sector. Firstly, as already presented, these types of products owe their principal qualitative characteristics to the territory and all the social, economic and technical interactions occurring there (Spielmann & Charters, 2013). Secondly, through the reputation acquired, the economic income generated, the landscape created and the traditions formed in their environment, these products add competitive value to their places of origin. This cultural blend results in the potential emergence of creative tourism initiatives (cf. Fig. 1).

As explained by Cabeça et al. (2020), developing creative tourism initiatives according to the supply of local resources, through the involvement of the destination's communities, can be an effective response to the challenges of sustainable development faced by areas of low population density, adding economic and social value to communities, local institutions and territories and regions as a whole. This type of initiative can add the effects of dissemination and economic valorisation to the whole range of regional agri-food products.

Creative tourism is an emerging form of tourism, on both the supply and demand side, allowing tourists to have deeper contact with, and knowledge of the local culture, through direct participation in cultural and creative activities that create experiences and emotions through involvement in the destination's life (Almeida, 2019).

The rural world is usually centred on particular forms of nature-society relations, in which people cooperate or struggle against the non-humanity of nature (Szerszynski, 2003). Creative spaces can represent the simple multi-functionality of a village hall, rather than extended artistic quarters of metropolitan areas and creative activities can consist of apparently simple learning to appreciate local products, rather than acquiring more ostentatious skills (Richards & Wilson,

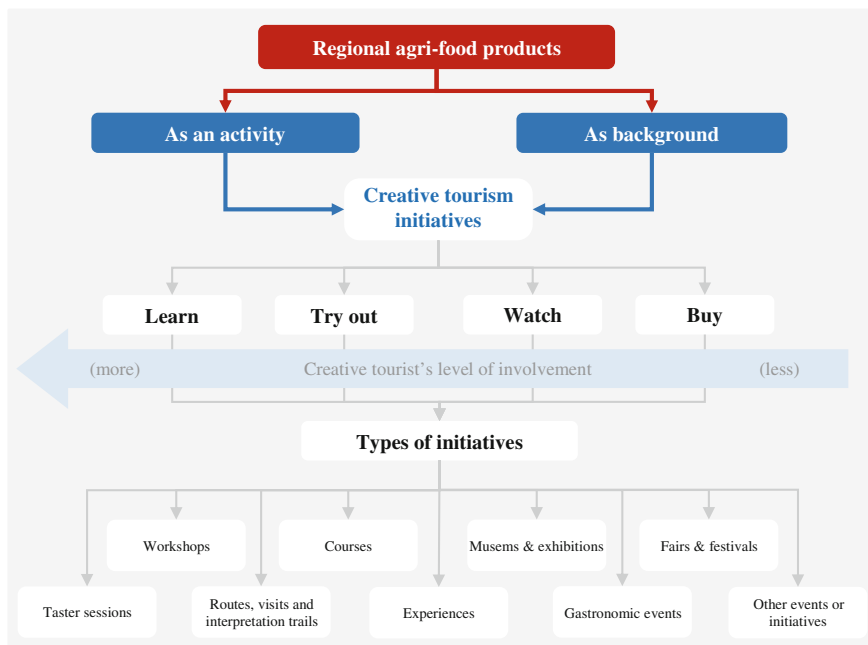


Fig. 2 Creative tourism initiatives based on the territory and agri-food products. Source: Own elaboration, based on Richards (2009, 2010)

2006). Alternatively, creativity in rural tourism can suggest new ways of understanding creativity, for example, in terms of hybrid nature-society activities based on eco-experience or adventure. Clearly, however, various practices giving tourists the opportunity to develop their creative potential through forms of active participation in rural contexts can, in turn, lead to new reproductions of the rural space (Clope, 2007).

Therefore, creative tourism covers a vast range of experiences. These can imply more active involvement in more formal settings (such as courses or workshops) and more passive forms of creative consumption, such as cultural itineraries or even design shops (Richards, 2010).

Creative tourism initiatives developed in rural areas supported by their endogenous resources follow exactly the models of creative tourism proposed by Richards (2010, 2020). Many different types of experiences and products can be offered to the creative tourist. Once again, as mentioned by Richards (2009), these experiences vary from more active forms of involvement, such as learning a specific activity, to engaging in visits to galleries and shops in search of creative products. The same happens for activities and initiatives involving regional agri-food products that can be provided to the creative tourist. However, due to the shortage of means and critical mass with the capacity and availability to develop them, it is more common to hold events including a variety of creative tourism initiatives or activities (Fig. 2).

2.4 *Central Research Question, Proposition and Conceptual Model*

The progress in its technological capacity and generalised adoption has made ICT, and particularly the internet and social networks, an effective, low-cost instrument, both to spread information and to gather ideas from increasingly informed publics (Bonsón et al., 2015). This study focuses on the information contained on the websites and Facebook pages of local entities responsible for promoting and raising awareness of tourism, in relation to the main objective defined. These two forms of communication were chosen because nowadays they are powerful tools to market destinations (Pike & Page, 2014), being used to create sustainable competitive advantages for destinations in the competitive scenario of global tourism (Piñeiro-Naval & Serra, 2018).

As this study is part of a broader line of research aiming to understand the effects of regional agri-food products of differentiated quality (for example, with PDO, PGI and TSC certification) on the sustainable development of their places of origin, based on the literature review, the central research question is as follows: *are place-linked agri-food products of differentiated quality recognised as the brand image of their territories of origin by the regional and local entities responsible for promoting and advertising tourism?*

Specifically, this research aims to: (1) determine the coverage of the websites and Facebook pages of local and regional entities responsible for promoting and advertising tourism; (2) identify and assess the importance and recognition of regional agri-food products, as brand images for their places of origin, by these same entities; and (3) identify and characterise the creative tourism initiatives developed in these places that have regional agri-food products as the main element or background.

The collective nature of an agri-food product, together with its capacity to include suitably the identity, qualities and culture of a territory, strengthens the forms of valorisation defined locally (Bérard & Marchenay, 2008). Therefore, promoting agri-food products has many more implications than the mere intention to sell them (Slee, 1993).

Quality agri-food products, and all the aspects involved in them, are the driver of a diversified range of rural development projects implemented in recent years in many areas that were previously considered marginal from the economic point of view (Brunori & Rossi, 2000; De Salvo et al., 2013). These projects have given new life to those regions, not only economically but also strengthening them socially (Armesto-López & Gómez-Martín, 2006).

The tourism sector has benefited greatly from these rural development projects. However, tourism is also fertile ground for valorisation of local food heritage (Espeitx Bernat, 2004). Here, the link between the agricultural and tourism sectors in predominantly rural areas has led to the development of bi-directional quality standards (Armesto-López & Gómez-Martín, 2006).

Given the great potential of the link between tourism and regional agri-food products in valorisation of rural territories and in their development, regional and

local entities responsible for stimulating tourist activity can be expected to use this synergy to promote their localities. This leads to the first proposition:

Proposition 1 (P₁) Regional and local entities responsible for promoting tourist activity recognise place-linked agri-food products as tourist assets promoting their places of origin.

In recent years, new forms of tourism have emerged in geographical areas until then neglected by tourism agents, and therefore, by consumers (Cava-Jiménez et al., 2019). This aspect is particularly relevant if considering that the modern tourist industry pays more and more attention to the experiential dimension and intangible heritage of travelling. This leads to a transformation of tourism, ceasing to be only a service market and becoming an authentic market of emotions and feelings (De Salvo et al., 2013). In this context, the search for tourist activities with the potential for a sensory component requires re-organisation of the traditional form (Nocifora et al., 2011).

These experiences should ensure the use and valorisation of the most unique and attractive endogenous resources, in order to increase sustainability in the context of an integrated tourism supply (Saxena et al., 2007), and to raise unique positioning, based on independent and inimitable geographical, historical and/or cultural characteristics (Ritchie & Crouch, 2003). These strategies should produce the best destination-market combination possible, making optimal use of local resources and competences by projecting tourist experience opportunities targeted at those potentially most interested in this type of local experience (Kastenholz et al., 2016).

Therefore, since different places, territories, regions and even nations seek rapid ways to differentiate in the global economy (Turok, 2009), creative tourism initiatives based on regional agri-food products can be an important alternative in the tourist industry. Consequently, the second proposition is as follows:

Proposition 2 (P₂) Agri-food products linked to places are the basis of creative tourism activities developed in their territories of origin.

The symbiotic, synergistic relation between place-linked agri-food products and tourism is a mechanism frequently used to promote the whole territory, through combined initiatives of conventional and creative tourism (Fig. 3).

3 Methodology

3.1 Sample

In the empirical approach, the subject of analysis is a portfolio of place-linked, agri-food products, originating in two neighbouring border regions of Portugal and Spain: *Cereja do Fundão* (cherries) and *Queijo Serra da Estrela* (cheese) from the Central Region of Portugal and *Cereza del Jerte* (cherries) and *Torta del Casar* (cheese) from the province of Cáceres in Extremadura, Spain. The analysis made in

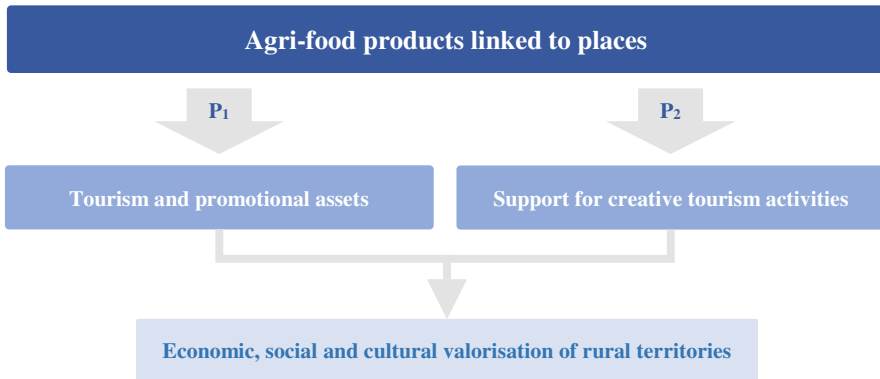


Fig. 3 Creative tourism initiatives based on territory and place-linked agri-food products. Source: Own elaboration

this study concerns the geographical areas of their production, dealing with the creative tourism initiatives promoted on the websites and Facebook pages of the local entities responsible for tourism promotion and advertising.

These entities were selected based on what is set out in Portuguese legislation. In this respect, the Portuguese government clearly states it is up to regional entities and local public entities to “*organise and divulge tourist information*” (sub-heading e, of number 2, of article 5, of Law n^o 33/2013, p. 2912), considering these entities’ important role in communicating the touristic and gastronomic identity of their respective regions.

Therefore, besides the national bodies promoting tourism in Spain and Portugal—selected for the sample due to being the institutional support for all tourism projects developed at the regional level—the same bodies but with regional and local responsibilities were selected, as well as producing and commercialising entities, since as Barroco and Augusto (2016) indicate, the promotion and valorisation of endogenous products should also be one of their responsibilities.

According to typology and geographical sphere of action, the selected entities are distributed in four groups: national entities (Level I); regional entities (Level II); municipal or supra-municipal entities, in Portugal, and municipal, local council or provincial entities, in Spain (Level III); and entities of a local, municipal, supra-municipal or regional nature in Portugal, or of a local, municipal, local council or provincial nature in Spain, with responsibilities for the promotion and valorisation of the agri-food products focused on in this study (Level IV) (Table 1).

The field of research comprised the websites and Facebook pages of regional and local entities responsible for promoting and advertising tourism in their territories. This domain was selected based on the success obtained in similar studies by authors using this methodology (see Cabeceiro et al., 2019; Jiménez Morales & de San Eugenio Vela, 2009; Lev-On & Steinfeld, 2015; Piñeiro-Naval et al., 2016; Piñeiro-Naval & Serra, 2018; Roque et al., 2012). The sample is formed of 85 entities, corresponding to a total of 83 websites and 81 Facebook pages (Table 2).

Table 1 Selected entities from the places of origin of agri-food products

	Spain	Portugal
Level I	Spanish Tourist Board	Portuguese Tourist Board
Level II	Extremadura Tourism	Centre of Portugal Tourism
Level III	Cáceres Province	Inter-municipal communities (CIM)
	Local Authorities	Local Authorities (Councils)
	Local Action Groups (LAG)	Local Action Groups (GAL)
Level IV	Regulating Councils of PDO	PDO and PGI Producer Groups
	Public entities promoting tourism at the local level	Public entities promoting tourism at the local level

Source: Own elaboration

Table 2 N° of websites and Facebook pages per regional agri-food product

Regional agri-food products	Entities	Websites	Facebook pages
Cereja do Fundão (cherries)	15	15	15
Queijo Serra da Estrela (cheese)	37	37	36
Cereza del Jerte (cherries)	17	15	14
Torta del Casar (cheese)	16	16	16
	85	83	81

Source: Own elaboration

3.2 Data Collection Method

At a first stage, to identify references to the regional agri-food products on the websites and Facebook pages, the exploratory method was used. In the second stage, aiming to characterise the creative tourism initiatives based on these products, one of the research methods most commonly used by researchers in the area of communication media (Berger, 2000) and tourism (Veal, 2006) was adopted, i.e., content analysis.

The search for references to regional agri-food products on the websites and Facebook pages of the selected entities followed a matrix of indicators based on the previous work by Bezerra and Correia (2019), Bonsón et al. (2015) and Hoffman and Fodor (2010). Application of this matrix of analysis reveals in which sections of the websites and Facebook pages there are references to agri-food products, besides identifying events, activities and initiatives (Table 3).

In the second stage, the identification, classification and characterisation of creative tourism events or initiatives were based on the work of Richards (2009, 2010), which is schematically represented in the decision tree below in Fig. 4.

Table 3 Types of references searched on the websites and Facebook pages per regional agri-food product

A. Websites
1. References to the product on the first page of the website
1.1. Tourist information
1.2. News
1.3. Coming events
1.4. Photographs
1.5. Links to specific pages on the product
1.6. Presence in the latest news/highlights
2. In the search box on the website, search for the name of the product related to the entity (" <i>name of the product</i> ") and record the number and type of resulting entries
2.1. Information on the product
2.2. Tourist information
2.3. News
2.4. Activities and events:
(a) Creative tourism initiatives
(b) Other initiatives
B. Facebook pages
(In the section on events, count the number of events held related to the agri-food product (or only promoted by the entity), during 2019 and 2020)
1. Events where the product is the central element
1.1. Creative tourism events and initiatives
1.2. Other type of events
2. Other type of events

Source: Own elaboration

4 Results

4.1 *Place-Linked Agri-Food Products on Websites and Facebook Pages*

The first proposition intends to determine to what extent regional and local entities responsible for tourism promotion and dynamics recognise regional agri-food products as touristic and promotional assets of their places of origin. In this context, given the relevance of websites in organisations' communication, local authorities and regional tourism bodies use them to attract potential visitors by compiling an appealing leisure and cultural offer.

Aiming to test empirically the validity of the above proposition, the analysis method described in the previous section was applied to the websites of regional and local entities responsible for tourism promotion and dynamics. This revealed that only 15.66%, of all the websites tested made explicit mention of place-linked agri-food products on their initial pages (Table 4).

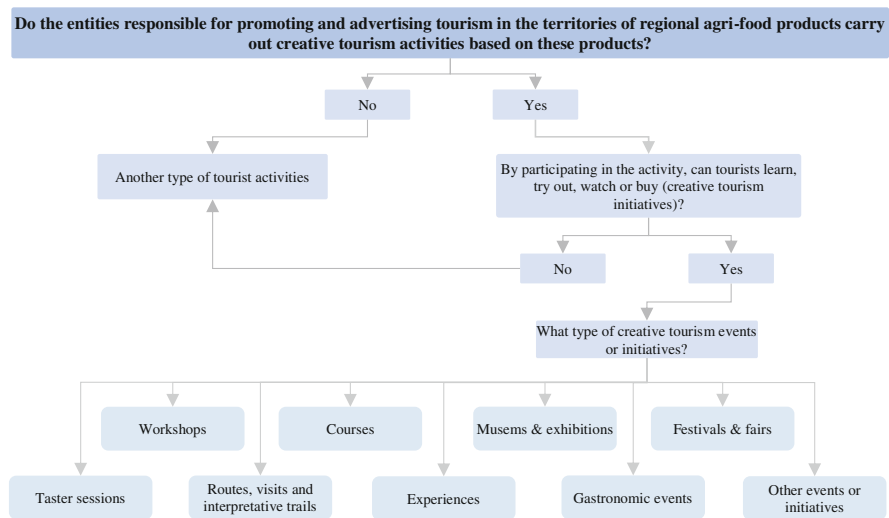


Fig. 4 Creative tourism initiatives based on the territory and agri-food products. Source: Own elaboration

Table 4 Number and type of references to regional agri-food products on websites

	Cereja do Fundão	Queijo Serra da Estrela	Cereza del Jerte	Torta del Casar	Total websites
Number of websites of the product’s area of origin	15	37	15	16	83
1. References to the product on the first page	3	3	4	3	13
1.1. Tourist information	0	0	0	1	1
1.2. News	2	2	0	0	4
1.3. Events to be held	0	3	1	1	5
1.4. Photographs	2	3	3	3	11
1.5. Links to specific pages on the product	2	1	0	1	4
1.6. Presence in the latest news/ highlights	2	1	0	0	3
2. References to the product after placing its name in the search box on the website	4	18	6	6	34
2.1. Information about the product	1	4	1	3	9
2.2. Tourist information	1	10	2	2	15
2.3. News	3	16	3	2	24
2.4. Activities and events:	4	11	7	4	26
(a) Creative tourism initiatives	3	9	5	3	20
(b) Other initiatives	1	2	2	1	6

Source: Own elaboration

In relative terms, when grouped by area of origin of the regional agri-food product, the websites of entities in the territory of *Cereza del Jerte* refer most to the product, being recorded on 26.67% of the websites analysed, i.e., in four of the fifteen websites.

The type of reference most commonly found, i.e., in 13.25% of the websites, is through photographs of agri-food products, followed by promotion of related events.

Searching through entering its exact name in the search box on the websites revealed references to the agri-food products in 40.96% of cases, i.e., in 34 of the 83 websites analysed. In relative terms, when grouped by the area of the regional agri-food product's origin, the websites of entities for the territory of *Queijo Serra da Estrela* make most reference to the product, being recorded in 48.65% of the websites analysed, i.e., in 18 of the 37.

The most common type of reference, present in 26 websites, concerns activities and events, and among these, creative tourism initiatives are highlighted, present in 24.10% of the 83 websites analysed, and other types of activities and events, present in 7.23% of the 83.

In relative terms, the websites of entities from the territory of *Cereza del Jerte* show the greatest number of activities and events related to the agri-food product, and 33.33% of these are creative tourism initiatives.

As for the holding of events, and their promotion, an analysis was also made of entities' Facebook pages, since as highlighted by Cabeceiro et al. (2019), this social network is a communication channel much used by local bodies to promote tourism in their areas. This social network also reveals the events held over the years since the page was created. This is important, as the global restrictions since the beginning of 2020 caused by the COVID 19 pandemic have prevented events from being held, and so it was possible to see the events held and promoted on the various entities' Facebook pages in 2019, a year of full activity.

Besides revealing that only 81 of the 85 entities analysed have Facebook pages, the study showed that overall in 2019, only 58.02%, promoted events, and in 2020, this number was reduced to 43 pages corresponding to 53.09% (cf. Table 5), which is closely associated with the suspension of events due to the worldwide public health crisis.

Taking as a reference the data presented in Table 5, in relative terms, when grouped by the area of origin of the regional agri-food product, the Facebook pages of the entities of the territory of *Cereza del Jerte*, with 71.43% in 2019 and 57.14% in 2020, and those of *Queijo Serra da Estrela*, with 61.11% in 2019 and 55.56% in 2020, make most use of this channel to promote events related to agri-food products.

Of all the Facebook pages analysed, 12.35% in 2019 and 9.88% in 2020 promoted creative tourism events. Considering only the pages that promoted events, the percentage of pages promoting creative tourism events was 21.28%, in 2019, and 18.6%, in 2020.

It also stands out that despite the low number of entities promoting events through their Facebook pages, this social network was used very proficiently. Those Facebook pages promoted an average of 37.97 events in 2019 and 24.95 events in 2020. The lower average number of events in 2020 is due to the restrictions caused

Table 5 Number of Facebook pages promoting events

Number of Facebook pages Years	Cereja do Fundão		QueijoSerra da Estrela		Cereza del Jerte		Torta del Casar		Total events				
	2019	2020	2019	2020	2019	2020	2019	2020	2019	2020			
(a) Entities promoting events on their Facebook pages	7	7	0	22	20	-2	10	8	8	0	47	43	-4
(b) Facebook pages that promote creative tourism events related to the regional Agri-food product	2	2	0	2	1	-1	5	1	4	3	10	8	-2
(c) Facebook pages that promote other events related to the regional Agri-food product	1	2	1	1	0	-1	1	2	0	-2	5	4	-1
(d) Facebook pages that promote other types of events	7	6	-1	22	19	-3	10	8	4	-4	47	37	-4

Source: Own elaboration

Table 6 Types of events promoted on Facebook pages

	Cereja do Fundão		Queijo Serra da Estrela		Cereza del Jerte		Torta del Casar		Total events	
	2019	2020	2019	2020	2019	2020	2019	2020	2019	2020
Number of Facebook pages	15		36		14		16		81	
Years	2019	2020	2019	2020	2019	2020	2019	2020	2019	2020
Entities promoting events on their Facebook pages	7	7	22	20	10	8	8	8	47	43
1. Events on the Facebook page where the Agri-food product is the central element	14	10	3	1	8	5	12	4	37	20
1.1. Creative tourism events and initiatives	10	3	2	1	7	2	7	4	26	10
1.2. Other types of events	4	7	1	0	1	3	5	0	11	10
2. Other types of events	431	202	479	160	337	130	158	7	1405	499
Total events	445	212	482	161	345	135	170	11	1442	519

Source: Own elaboration

by the COVID 19 pandemic. Even so, in the first two months of 2020, the frequency of events promoted was normal. After the first semester of 2020, the promotion of online events began to appear on these entities' Facebook pages.

Once again, it is entities of the territory of *Cereza del Jerte* that make most use of their Facebook pages to promote the events held: 71.43% of the pages consulted promoted events in 2019 and 57.14% continued to do so in 2020 (cf. Table 6). In the two years analysed, it was also the Spanish entities that proportionately promoted a greater percentage of creative tourism events related to agri-food products in their territories. In 2019, 35.71% of entities of the territory of *Cereza del Jerte* that promoted events on their Facebook pages also promoted creative tourism events, and in 2020, 25.00% of entities of the territory of *Torta del Casar* promoting events on their Facebook pages also promoted creative tourism events.

Given the evidence obtained, it is not possible to confirm for all regional and local entities responsible for promoting tourist activity that all recognise their place-linked agri-food products as tourist assets promoting their places of origin.

4.2 Innovative Creative Tourism Initiatives Based on Place-Linked Agri-Food Products

This study also identified 49 creative tourism initiatives held in the places of origin of the four agri-food products. The products motivating mostly this type of initiative are *Torta del Casar* and *Queijo Serra da Estrela*, since, respectively, 34.69% and 26.53% of the tourism initiatives identified are based on these products.

It stands out that the creative tourism initiatives identified belong to the typologies and models of creative tourism proposed by Richards (2010, 2020). In these territories, except for “Taster sessions”, “Courses” and “Workshops”, the creative tourism initiatives fit in all the typologies proposed by this author (see Fig. 2), with more than 50.00% belonging to the typologies of “Festivals and Fairs” (26.53%) and “Experiences” (24.49%), as seen in Table 7.

The most prominent typologies of creative tourism initiatives on the websites and Facebook pages of entities in the place of origin of each agri-food product, for *Cereja do Fundão* and *Torta del Casar*, this is “Experiences”, corresponding to 33.33% and 66.77% of all the creative tourism initiatives identified in each of these territories. Regarding the websites and Facebook pages of the territorial entities of *Queijo Serra da Estrela*, 46.15% of the initiatives identified fit the typology of “Routes, visits and interpretative trails”, while for *Cereza del Jerte*, 63.64% correspond to “Festivals and Fairs”.

The creative tourism initiatives identified on the websites and Facebook pages of the territorial entities of each agri-food product provide the tourist with different types of involvement. According to the description of each initiative identified, this involvement rarely belongs to just one of the involvement typologies identified by Richards (2010, 2020), these being “learning”, “trying out”, watching” or “buying”.

Table 7 Typologies of creative tourism initiatives identified by territory

	Cereja do Fundão	Queijo Serra da Estrela	Cereza del Jerte	Torta del Casar	Total
Taster sessions	0	0	0	0	0
Courses	0	0	0	0	0
Gastronomic events	1	1	1	1	4
Experiences	4	0	0	8	12
Festivals and fairs	1	3	7	2	13
Museums and exhibitions	0	1	2	4	7
Workshops	0	0	0	0	0
Routes, visits, interpretative trails	1	6	1	2	10
Other events or initiatives	1	2	0	0	3
Total	8	13	11	17	49

Source: Own elaboration

These initiatives vary greatly in the form of tourist involvement. On the one hand, some initiatives imply more active forms of involvement, such as learning about a specific activity, for example in “*Little Shepherds, Little Craft people. Learn and have fun with your hands in the cheese in the open air*”, held in the place of origin of *Torta del Casar*, or have a day fruit-picking, as in the activity “*It’s cherry time—Pick Fundão cherries in the orchard*” in the place of origin of *Cereja do Fundão* or enter the life of the cooperatives, as in “*Guided tours of the Cooperative Group of Valle del Jerte*”, in the territory of *Cereza del Jerte*. On the other hand, in some activities the tourist’s involvement is less, for example, in visits to the “*Cheese Museum*” or the “*Cheese Manor*” in the territory of *Queijo da Serra da Estrela*, having a picnic when the cherry trees are in blossom through the initiative of “*Picnic Baskets—Cherry Blossom*” in the territory of *Cereja do Fundão* or appreciating the landscape in “*Rural Paths—Cherry trees in Blossom*” in the territory of *Cereza del Jerte*.

The evidence obtained overall does not allow complete confirmation of the second proposition, indicating that place-linked agri-food products are the basis of creative tourism activities organised in their territories of origin, despite finding a centrifugal force present in some initiatives of public–private co-creation, with the responsibilities and risks shared between local producers and municipal entities.

The following tables (cf. Tables 8, 9, 10, and 11) contain a description by type of initiative and typology of tourist involvement, of the 47 tourism initiatives identified in the course of this study, and the entities promoting or advertising them.

5 Conclusion

Creative tourism is an alternative sector in tourism which has seen strong, rapid growth in most parts of the world, but due to its newness does not yet have very well-defined limits. In recent years, Spain and Portugal have followed this global trend, with institutions linked to this type of tourism demonstrating efforts to achieve co-creation and have done so with the major involvement of local communities.

The main aim of the research presented in this chapter is to understand to what extent four place-linked agri-food products, originating in neighbouring border regions of Portugal and Spain, are considered tourist assets in their territories of origin, and the basis for developing creative tourist initiatives. Based on the literature of reference on the topic, two propositions were put forward and tested through methodology developed specially for this study and supported by the previous work by Jiménez Morales and de San Eugenio Vela (2009), Roque et al. (2012), Lev-On and Steinfeld (2015), Piñeiro-Naval et al. (2016), Bezerra and Correia (2019) and Cabeceiro et al. (2019), consisting of exploratory analysis of the websites and Facebook pages of regional and local entities responsible for promoting tourism initiatives in these agri-food products’ territories of origin.

Concerning the first proposition, it is considered that regional and local entities responsible for promoting tourism activities recognise regional agri-food products as tourist assets able to promote their territories of origins.

Table 8 Creative tourism initiatives identified in the territory of origin of *Cereja do Fundão*

N°	Designation	Type of initiative	Description	Promoter	Typology of tourist involvement		
					Learn	Try out	Watch
1	Picnic Baskets—Cherry trees in Blossom	Experience	“Hiring” Picnic Baskets, intending to give everyone a unique experience in the midst of the protected area and get to know the tastes of Fundão.	Fundão Local Authority	✓	✓	✓
2	It’s time to pick Fundão cherries	Experience	Visit to the Fundão cherry orchards with picking; visit to Fundão’s historic centre; Free for lunch; Walk through the Slate Village of Janeiro de Cima with entry to the Weavers’ House.	Fundão Local Authority	✓	✓	✓
3	It’s cherry time—Pick Fundão cherries in the orchard	Experience	Visit the Fundão Cherry orchards, with fruit-picking; visit Fundão’s historic centre; Free for lunch; Cherry Festival. The experience intended is picking and eating cherries directly from the tree.	Fundão Local Authority	✓	✓	✓
4	Trips by hot air balloon	Experience	Activity aiming to give a different perspective of the cherry orchards, normally held when the orchards are in production.	Fundão Local Authority		✓	✓
5	Fundão, here you eat well: Cherry tastes	Gastronomic event	Gastronomic festival involving restaurant, cake-shops and bars in the territory, where the main ingredient is the Fundão cherry.	Fundão Local Authority	✓		✓
6	Cherry Festival in Alcongosta	Festivals & fairs	Event held in the mountain village of Alcongosta, with various activities related to the cherry and its sector.	Fundão Local Authority	✓	✓	✓

7	Cherry trees in Blossom— Cherry tourist train	Other events and initiatives	Tourist train through the orchards in blossom in the Gardunhamountain range, Visit to Fundão's historic centre, Free for lunch, Visit the historic village of Castelo Novo	Fundão Local Authority		✓	
8	Cherry Trail	Routes, visits and interpretative trails	Walking tour on the north slope of the Gardunha mountain range, characterised by the abundance of cherry tree terraces and production of the famous Fundão cherry.	Fundão Local Authority		✓	

Source: Own elaboration

Table 9 Creative tourism initiatives identified in the territory of origin of *Queijo Serra da Estrela*

N°	Designation	Type of initiative	Description	Promoter	Typology of tourist involvement		
					Learn	Try out	Watch
1	Culinary Competition "With Serra da Estrela Cheese"	Gastronomic event	Activity promoting Serra da Estrela cheese which, besides presenting different sweet and savoury specialities made from Serra da Estrela cheese and its derivatives, seeks to encourage innovation and entrepreneurship for the possible creation of products of reference	Oliveira do Hospital Local Authority	✓	✓	
2	Festival of the Shepherd and Mountain Cheese	Festivals and fairs	An annual event held on the first Sunday of March at Mosteiro/Pena Verde, which includes a presentation and competition of bordaleira sheep, with around 40 local producers generally participating.	Aguar da Beira Local Authority	✓	✓	✓
3	Cheese Fair	Festivals and fairs	Event with many activities related to Serra da Estrela cheese, organised annually by Celorico da Beira Local Authority.	Celorico da Beira Local Authority	✓	✓	✓
4	Serra da Estrela Cheese Fair	Festivals and fairs	Event in which shepherds, cheese-makers and producers are the main figures, with around 30 cheese producers selling their product. Visitors can taste and buy the best of the Local Authority's produce.	Gouveia Local Authority	✓	✓	✓
5	Serra da Estrela Cheese Fair	Festivals and fairs	Event to promote the identity and rural life of shepherds, traditional cheese-makers and producers of PDO cheese. Other regional products are also present, such as olive oil, charcuterie, honey and regional sweets. Also involved are craftspeople, music and folk traditions, the Serra da Estrela dog and the Serra da Estrela sheep.	Fornos de Algodres Local Authority	✓	✓	✓

6	Serra da Estrela Cheese Festival	Festivals and fairs	Event aiming mainly to promote Serra da Estrela cheese and other endogenous products of the region, including aspects of gastronomy, habits and customs, historical and archaeological heritage of Oliveira do Hospital local authority. There are also cookery demonstrations using Serra da Estrela cheese, seminars and exhibitions on the subject and cultural entertainment, and for the youngest, arts workshops at the “Cheese School” and dramatisation linked to the Serra da Estrela cheese and the area’s history and culture.	Oliveira do Hospital Local Authority	✓	✓	✓	✓
7	Shepherd and Cheese Fair	Festivals and fairs	Event presenting the local authority’s potential: Serra da Estrela cheese, “Dão de Penalva” wine, Bravo de Esmolfe apples and smoked ham, crafts, liquors and sweets.	Penalva do Castelo Local Authority	✓	✓	✓	✓
8	Serra da Estrela Cheese Fair	Festivals and fairs	Event aiming mainly to promote and raise the value of Serra da Estrela cheese and the whole sector in Seia Local Authority and the region.	Seia Local Authority	✓	✓	✓	✓
9	Cheese Museum	Museums and exhibitions	The Cheese Museum aims to spread knowledge about traditions, the sound of the fields being worked, the shepherd, flocks and transhumance. It provides a true journey of the senses around Serra da Estrela cheese and the plains of Cova da Beira, formerly known as the Valley of the Jews. It is also an excellent place to taste the delicious cheese produced in the region.	Covilhã Local Authority	✓	✓	✓	✓

(continued)

Table 9 (continued)

N°	Designation	Type of initiative	Description	Promoter	Typology of tourist involvement			
					Learn	Try out	Watch	Buy
10	Cheese Manor	Museums and exhibitions	Museum related to the activity of Serra da Estrela cheese. Exhibition of artefacts used in producing hand-made cheese, explaining all steps in the process of making Serra da Estrela cheese, from milking to the gourmet/consumer's table. Here there is also tasting of Serra da Estrela cheese and charcuterie for groups of visitors.	Celório da Beira Local Authority	✓	✓	✓	✓
11	Serra da Estrela Cheese Trail	Routes, visits and interpretative trails	The Local Authority decided to reform the trail, and now besides the characteristics of this endogenous product, people can get to know the authorised producers and sellers of the cheese.	Oliveira do Hospital Local Authority			✓	

Source: Own elaboration

Table 10 Creative tourism initiatives identified in the territory of origin of *Cereza del Jerte*

N°	Designation	Type of initiative	Description	Promoter	Typology of tourist involvement			
					Learn	Try out	Watch	Buy
1	Valle del Jerte Cherry Fair	Festivals and fairs	The Valle del Jerte Cherry Fair takes place in Valle del Jerte as part of the cultural offer of “Cerecera” held in the 11 communities of the local authority. It includes a great many activities, such as cherry-tasting and classification, cherry market, street entertainment, games and guided tours, which can be enjoyed from the end of May to the beginning of August.	Soprodrevaaje LAG	✓	✓	✓	✓
2	Cherry Blossom Festival	Festivals and fairs	Festival of national tourist interest, running each year from the end of March to the beginning of April in Valle del Jerte, Extremadura, celebrating the cherry trees in blossom with various events, such as exhibitions, medieval markets, open-air parties, trails and tasting, in the villages in the valley.	Community of local authorities of Valle del Jerte	✓	✓	✓	✓
3	La Cerecera	Festivals and fairs	The harvesting of the famous Valle del Jerte cherries takes place in May, June and July. At this time the “Cerecera” has been celebrated for many years, a cultural, gastronomic and entertainment programme to promote discovery of the essence of the Valley in its most interesting, authentic period.	Soprodrevaaje LAG	✓	✓	✓	✓

(continued)

Table 10 (continued)

N°	Designation	Type of initiative	Description	Promoter	Typology of tourist involvement			
					Learn	Try out	Watch	Buy
4	Gastronomic Days of the Cherry	Gastronomic event	Event held in different restaurants in Valle del Jerte, including the tasting of dishes prepared with cherries.	Community of local authorities of Valle del Jerte		✓		✓
5	Cherry Museum	Museums and exhibitions	Housed in a traditional building in Valle del Jerte, showing traditional elements of traditional architecture. Enter the world of the Valle cherries, viewing the different displays over three floors. It uses various interactive resources to recreate original environments and objects and give the feeling of putting the “garabato” on one’s shoulder, the basket that generations of locals have used to pick the Jerte cherries, with the instrument used, the “recolector”, being very personal. The visitor can also get to know the indigenous varieties of cherries, especially the famous “picotas del Jerte”, aspects related to caring for the health of the cherries and the fruit’s production in terraces.	Valle del Jerte Tourism Association	✓		✓	
6	Open Days in the Cooperatives of Valle del Jerte	Routes, visits and interpretative trails	Activity including a guided tour of the premises of different cooperatives in Valle del Jerte and the respective cherry-tasting.	Valle del Jerte Tourism Association	✓		✓	

7	Cherry Blossom Mountain Bike trail	Routes, visits and interpretative trails	The prime mountain bike trail in the area in spring, following a route that cannot fail to impress those who love the sport.	Community of local authorities of Valle del Jerte, Casas del Castañar Town Hall and Valle del Jerte Cooperatives	✓	
8	Dog-Walking in the Cherry Blossom	Routes, visits and interpretative trails	Activity to appreciate the beauty of the countryside created each year by over a million cherry trees, the economic driver of this community. It is also an opportunity to take your dog along and get to know other animal lovers, and especially, a time to collaborate with the Animal Protection Shelter in Plasencia.	Community of local authorities of Valle del Jerte	✓	
9	Marked Trail—Cherry Blossom	Routes, visits and interpretative trails	The PR-CC 2 of the Cherry Blossom, marked out in white and yellow, is one of the most popular routes in Valle del Jerte with the numerous paths of Villa de Tomavacas. Over 22 kms, it follows the descent of the River Jerte, rising and falling among cherry orchards, oak and chestnut trees.	Community of local authorities of Valle del Jerte	✓	
10	Visits to cherry farms and leisure and adventure activities	Routes, visits and interpretative trails	Take a trip to Valle del Jerte, visit farms, pick cherries, learn the secrets of the Jerte cherries and appreciate beautiful landscape with the help of professional, local guides. Try out delicious, special menus highlighting the cherry.	Valle del Jerte Tourism Association	✓	✓
11	Guided tours of the Valle del Jerte Group of Cooperatives	Routes, visits and interpretative trails	Visits to the premises of the Valle del Jerte Group of Cooperatives	Valle del Jerte Tourism Association	✓	

(continued)

Table 10 (continued)

N°	Designation	Type of initiative	Description	Promoter	Typology of tourist involvement			
					Learn	Try out	Watch	Buy
12	Children's cooking. Junior workshops involving the Jerte cherry.	Other events and initiatives	At the workshop, children can learn by playing how the product is cultivated and how to prepare recipes using cherries with the help of a chef	Regulatory Council of the Protected Origin of the Cherry	✓	✓		
13	Cherry Market	Other events and initiatives	Cherry market with Valle del Jerte producers	Regulatory Council of the Protected Origin of the Cherry			✓	✓

Source: Own elaboration

Table 11 Creative tourism initiatives identified in the territory of origin of *Torta del Casar*

N°	Designation	Type of initiative	Description	Promoter	Typology of tourist involvement		
					Learn	Try out	Watch
1	The Secrets of the Pasture	Experience	Learn from an expert in gastronomy about the most interesting aspects of cheese, including <i>Torta del Casar</i> , accompanied by excellent wine.	Extremadura Cheese Trail: Navafriáy country house La Bodega de Pérez (cellar).	✓	✓	✓
2	Magic Transformation. Discover the best-kept secret of <i>Torta del Casar</i>	Experience	Guided tour of the Quesos del Casar cheese-makers to discover the production process of the well-known <i>Torta del Casar</i> . You will learn how this delicious <i>Torta del Casar</i> is formed, seeing first-hand a transformation that is as surprising as it is magical, from the most traditional process to the modern, innovative production techniques in one of the most important cheese-makers.	Extremadura Cheese Trail: Quesos del Casar cheese-makers	✓		✓
3	Cheese Safari	Experience	Visit the natural environment of Cáceres and surroundings in a 4 × 4 and learn about the workings of the pasture ecosystem as Extremadura's natural larder, visiting a farm raising sheep to produce the milk used in PDO <i>Torta del Casar</i> and tasting the famous and delicious cheese of that name.	Extremadura Cheese Trail: Extremadura Safari			✓

(continued)

Table 11 (continued)

N°	Designation	Type of initiative	Description	Promoter	Typology of tourist involvement			
					Learn	Try out	Watch	Buy
4	Who has taken my cheese? From shepherd to seller in a few hours.	Experience	An entertaining and educational workshop making Extremaduran cheese after milking a sheep to obtain the raw ingredient to do so. The day includes a traditional shepherd's breakfast, a guided tour of a farm with transport from Cáceres included, and the milking of sheep and goats. The milk obtained will be used in a cheese workshop in Zamarilla Leisure Centre, from which the results can be taken home.	Extremadura Cheese Trail: Légola	✓	✓		✓
5	Little Shepherds, Little Crafts-people. Learn and have fun with your hands in the cheese in the open countryside.	Experience	Légola provides children with activities through an educational-experiential programme of fun and learning activities around the cheese-making cultura and nature. On the farm of "La Zamarilla", you can become a shepherd milking goats and then make cheese from their milk. The day continues with a workshop of traditional sweets. There is also the chance to play various games or attend environmental education workshops.	Extremadura Cheese Trail: Légola	✓	✓	✓	✓

6	Traditional Tastes. Discover our villages, taste our products.	Experience	<p>Accommodation in a country house retaining all the atmosphere of the old labouring houses, perfectly situated on the Silver Route less than an hour from the Heritage towns of Cáceres and Mérida. As a Cheese Trail customer, the country house welcomes you with tasting of the three PDO cheeses of Extremadura, accompanied by a glass of local wine. Demonstration and lessons in the use of some tools involved in making the famous PDO cheeses of Torta del Casar, presenting the history of its creation, as well as useful advice for its consumption.</p>	Extremadura Cheese Trail: Silver Route, Country House	✓	✓	✓
7	Awaken your Senses through Cheese. Enjoy different tastes, smells and textures.	Experience	<p>An educational trip through the factory showing the whole process of traditional cheesemaking, with special emphasis on PDO Torta del Casar. You will then move to the tasting room where you will be able to try ten of the varieties produced. The unique characteristics of each will be explained. You will participate in making the cheese and realise the great difference between each of the 19 traditional cheese varieties produced.</p>	Extremadura Cheese Trail: Doña Francisca cheesemaker	✓	✓	✓

(continued)

Table 11 (continued)

N°	Designation	Type of initiative	Description	Promoter	Typology of tourist involvement			
					Learn	Try out	Watch	Buy
8	Combinations of Cheese and other Food. Tasting of traditional products in a natural setting.	Experience	The Pinotes House offers two types of tasting. Both take place in the Interpretation Centre of Cañada Real Soriana Occidental and shepherding culture of “Casa Pinotes”. It is located in a rural setting, excellent for bird-watching as it is inside a ZEPA area, together with the surrounding nature. Torta del Casar combined with wine: this will be in the presence of cheese experts and wine specialists, who will share their knowledge about these wonderful gastronomic products in a combination <i>par excellence</i> .	Extremadura Cheese Trail; Interpretative Centre of Pasture Culture “Casa Pinotes”	✓	✓	✓	✓
9	Torta del Casar Tapa Trail	Gastronomic event	The Torta del Casartapa trail is an opportunity to taste the delicious Tortain the local bars and restaurants.	Torta del Casar PDO authority; Casar de Cáceres Town Hall; LAG TAGUS; Cáceres provincial authority;	✓			✓
10	Torta del Casar Week	Festivals and fairs	Held at the beginning of autumn every year since 1995, numerous activities aim to promote and advertise the culture of Torta del Casar to all village residents and visitors of all ages.	PDOTorta del Casar Cooperative Foundation	✓		✓	✓

11	European Fair of Casar de Cáceres Cheese	Festivals and fairs	Event with the participation of cheese-makers from the territories belonging to the European Cheese Trail Association. The Fair is part of the 23rd Torta del Casar Week.	Casar de Cáceres Town Hall.	✓	✓	✓
12	Pinotes House. Interpretative Centre of Cañada Real Soriana Occidental	Museums and exhibitions	The Interpretative Centre of Cañada Real Soriana Occidental and shepherding culture "Pinotes House" has preserved its original structure. It was previously a working house in the area of stock raising, and now pays homage to transhumance and shepherding life through periodic and audio-visual exhibitions.	Casar de Cáceres Town Hall.	✓	✓	✓
13	Torta del Casar Interpretative Centre "Pastoralia"	Museums and exhibitions	Pastoralia is unique, with a wide variety of activities centred on Torta del Casar. You will be transported to the magical world of this magnificent, unique product and its related tasks and traditions. Everything is geared towards the visitor's enjoyment of a different and original environment.	Pastoralia	✓	✓	✓

(continued)

Table 11 (continued)

N°	Designation	Type of initiative	Description	Promoter	Typology of tourist involvement			
					Learn	Try out	Watch Buy	
14	Casar de Cáceres Cheese Museum	Museums and exhibitions	The Casar de Cáceres Cheese Museum presents the history and production process representing part of the identity of the local population: Torta del Casar. This museum shows how the locals have been able to maintain the characteristics of this singular product, preserving its essence through time.	Casar de Cáceres Town Hall.	✓		✓	
15	Tasting at the "Torta del Casar" Museum	Museums and exhibitions	Hourly guided tours and tasting of "Torta del Casar" combined with lerte cherries.	Casar de Cáceres Town Hall.	✓		✓	
16	Transhumance route	Routes, visits and interpretative trails	Since 2006, the Transhumance Route has attracted more than a thousand people each year, including a visit to the Interpretative Centre of Shepherding Life and Cañada Real "Pinotes House" as well as having a traditional shepherd's breakfast.	Casar de Cáceres Town Hall.	✓		✓	

17	Torta del Casar Trail	Routes, visits and interpretative trails	Paths and trails speak of the life of this land of transhumance and its most notable inhabitants, the shepherds and their flocks. Tanks for washing wool, mills, castles and ancient oaks mark those paths; and at the end of the hard day's work, the promise of a well-deserved rest in the ancient city of Cáceres, World Heritage Site, where history and gastronomy come together.	Extremadura Cheese Trail	✓	✓	✓
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Source: Own elaboration

In the scope of this exploratory study, there is partial confirmation of the first proposition, in that the evidence obtained reveals that only some of the entities whose websites and Facebook pages were subject to analysis use place-linked agri-food products as brand images of the territory they represent. In these cases, the entities not only use photographs and references to agri-food products on their websites and Facebook pages, but also organise various initiatives to encourage economic and social development, as well as actively involving the local population.

It is also highlighted that as the territories of origin of these agri-food products are vast, the entities located closest to the centre of the industrial operations related to the product tend to be the ones resorting to them as a promotional tool. For example, in the case of the territory of origin of *Cereja do Fundão* or *Torta del Casar*, it is the entities located in Fundão, in the former, and Casar de Cáceres, in the latter, that use the cherry or cheese most frequently as a brand image.

As for the second proposition, it is considered that place-linked agri-food products are the basis of creative tourism activities developed in their territories of origin, and similarly to the first proposition, there is only evidence leading to partial confirmation of this second proposition.

Once again, the results obtained showed that only some of the entities in the territories of origin of the place-linked agri-food products studied here use them as a basis to promote a wide range of initiatives, among them creative tourism initiatives.

The field of analysis was restricted to public entities, or those of a similar nature, which promote creative tourism initiatives based on these products. This is a limitation to overcome in future studies. Currently, a number of local companies, for example, in rural accommodation, leisure activities or even producers of these products, as found by Duxbury and Richards (2019), seek to incorporate local specificities, i.e., those linked to places, for example, portfolios of regional agri-food products with a strong identity, in creative tourism provision aiming for differentiation.

Finally, this study has shown that creative tourism initiatives, through the wide range of types of experiences these can include, when supported by place-linked agri-food products can be a very important element for diversification of the local economy and to reinforce the social dynamics of their territories of origin. Therefore, in responding to the central research questions, it should be pointed out that local entities recognise the value of their territories' agri-food products. The emergence of economic and social development actions based on creative tourism are an expanding phenomenon, despite requiring more professional management of all associated activities and initiatives. These should be integrated in new versions of intelligent specialisation strategies that consider places' characteristics and specificities, in a new form of global thinking and acting in the place, that is, through place-linked products.

Recommended for future research is exploration of creative tourism as a viable alternative to traditional tourism, which requires more in-depth studies about the influence of place-linked agri-food products on initiatives of this type in other regions. Besides the obvious comparative effect, this will allow better definition of the limits of this type of tourism and contribute to strengthening its definition and characterisation, helping to draw up new policies for sustainable tourism.

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