

The Mediterranean Diet and Traditional Algarvian Gastronomy: Gastronomic Itineraries as a Tool to Raise the Profile of the Algarve's Traditional Products

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Abstract:

The study of traditional Algarvian cuisine has become a topic of great interest since it has acquired ever greater importance in the context of tourism promotion. The justification of this study lies in this growing interest and, in particular, the scarcity of local studies on the topic. Therefore, knowledge about the Algarvian culture needs to be expanded to promote the dissemination of this intangible heritage, including customs, traditions and typical products, as well as to assess the value of this heritage as part of tourism promotion in the Algarve region.

This research sought to assess the role of the Algarve's traditional gastronomy as a factor in tourism promotion and to highlight differences in eating habits between the coastline and the interior of the Algarve. In addition, this study examined the motivations that lead tourists to choose Algarve as a tourist destination and evaluated the importance of gastronomic tours and itineraries in the dissemination of the region's intangible heritage. The research resulted in two itineraries based on geographical and sociological relevance criteria, one starting in Tavira and ending in Alcoutim and the other beginning in Faro and finishing in Querença.

In conclusion, the results show that local stakeholders continue to consider the Algarve to be a tourist region where the 'sun and sea' product continues to be a strong attraction. Nevertheless, the region's traditional cuisine, along with its traditions and local customs, have become increasingly important in tourist contexts as an important factor in the region's economic recovery.

Keywords: Mediterranean Diet; Traditional Algarvian Cuisine; Gastronomic Itineraries; Tourism

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Resumo:

O estudo da gastronomia tradicional algarvia é um tema de grande interesse, na medida em que tem vindo a adquirir cada vez maior importância no contexto da promoção turística.

Este estudo justifica-se por ser esta uma temática sobre a qual existe um interesse crescente e ainda existem poucos estudos ao nível dos locais; para aprofundar o conhecimento sobre a cultura algarvia, promovendo a divulgação do seu património imaterial, tradições e produtos típicos e para aferir o valor deste património como elemento da promoção turística da região do Algarve.

O objetivo é promover o conhecimento de realidades locais; aferir o papel da gastronomia tradicional algarvia como fator de promoção turística; evidenciar diferenças nos hábitos alimentares entre a zona litoral e o interior serrano; perceber quais as motivações que levam os turistas a optarem pelo Algarve como destino turístico e verificar a importância dos itinerários/roteiros gastronómicos na divulgação do património imaterial.

Para este estudo foram desenhados dois itinerários baseados em critérios de relevância geográfica e sociológica, um deles com início em Tavira e termo em Alcoutim e o outro com início em Faro e termo em Querença.

Em conclusão, constatou-se que os agentes locais continuam a considerar que: o Algarve é uma região turística onde o produto "Sol e Praia" continua a ser um forte atrativo, mas que, não obstante, a gastronomia tradicional, juntamente com as tradições e costumes locais, tem cada vez maior importância no contexto turístico, sendo um importante fator de valorização do mesmo.

Palavras-chave: Dieta Mediterrânica; Gastronomia Tradicional Algarvia; Itinerários Gastronómicos; Turismo

Resumen:

El estudio de la cocina tradicional del Algarve es un tema de gran interés en que ha adquirido cada vez más importancia en el contexto de la promoción del turismo.

Este estudio se justifica para profundizar en el conocimiento de la cultura del Algarve, la promoción de la difusión de su patrimonio inmaterial, tradiciones y productos típicos y para evaluar el valor de este patrimonio como parte de la promoción del turismo de la región del Algarve. Puesto que este es un tema en el que hay un creciente interés y existen muy pocos estudios del nivel del local.

El objetivo del mismo es promover el conocimiento de las realidades locales; evaluar el papel de la cocina tradicional del Algarve como factor de promoción del turismo; mostrar diferencias en los hábitos alimenticios entre las zonas costeras y en el interior serrano; comprender las motivaciones que llevan a los turistas a elegir el Algarve como destino turístico y verificar la importancia de las rutas / itinerarios gastronómicos en la difusión del patrimonio inmaterial.

Para este estudio se han diseñado dos rutas en base a criterios de relevancia geográfica y sociológica, uno con punto de partida en Tavira y llegada a Alcoutim; y el otro a con salida desde Faro y final en Querença.

En conclusión, se ha encontrado que los agentes locales siguen considerando que el Algarve es una región turística donde el producto "sol y playa" sigue siendo un atractivo fuerte. Pero que, sin embargo, la cocina tradicional con las tradiciones y las costumbres locales se han vuelto cada vez más importante en el contexto del turismo, siendo un factor importante de la apreciación de la misma.

Palabras Clave: Dieta Mediterránea; Cocina del Algarve Tradicional; Itinerarios Gastronomía; Turismo

1. Introduction

The Mediterranean diet encompasses the traditional food of countries around the Mediterranean Sea, which is considered a model for a healthy diet based on the regular consumption of indigenous products or those introduced by various civilisations that occupied these regions. In Portugal's case and, in particular, Algarve, this combination of foods has resulted from the presence of such peoples as the Phoenicians, Carthaginians, Romans and Arabs, who brought together all the products and spices coming from Africa and India – to which were later added those from the Americas.

Currently, research on traditional Algarvian gastronomy is a topic of great interest since it has grown in importance in the context of tourism promotion. As a result, the academic community has increasingly focused its attention on this area of research.

The growing interest in gastronomy is important because, in addition to generating basic publicity for regions, this focus on gastronomy has helped to raise the profile of all that is associated with food traditions. This accompanying local culture embodies the way of living and being of the people who are born and live in this region.

Until a few decades ago, gastronomy in and of itself was not considered a research topic. This only became a subject of research when some researchers dedicated themselves to the

study of everyday behaviours and habits (e.g. death, wills, marriages and fashion) in order to better understand humans as social beings. These studies fall within the scope of social anthropology, history and human geography, among other disciplines.

Gastronomy, as a part of cultural heritage, helps to define each people's cultural riches. Humans cannot be studied solely through what they eat but necessarily also in the way they eat.

Traditional gastronomy – resulting from the sum of various characteristics shaped by unique varieties and identities – occupies an extremely important place among the cultural objects that best identify the Portuguese as a people. It also is rooted in a collective memory that is the fruit of centuries of experimentation and creativity. However, in recent years, there has been a rapid introduction of products, specialities and dietary concepts from other countries. These have come largely through the distribution chains of large shopping centres.

According to Cabugueira (2000), this phenomenon results from various exogenous and interrelated dynamics. These include, among others, the diversification strategies of large agribusiness groups, the market entry strategies adopted by various brands to encourage profits based on economies of scale and the supply strategies adopted by large groups that distribute and sell food products. In addition, this process is the result of restrictions on leisure time imposed by many professions, especially in cities where people sometimes still have to deal with long delays due to traffic jams. Other influences are the disproportionate investment and promotional material associated with “non-traditional” products compared with those connected with traditional products, as well as the greater standardization, ease of use and design of most “non-traditional” products and the widespread exposure of individuals to outside cultural influences that result in progressive acculturation.

However, a revival can be observed, both in the public sector and among small entrepreneurs and their associated agents, of efforts to raise the profile of traditional Algarvian gastronomy's offer. These initiatives have made this cuisine well-known, repositioning it as a nutritionally-rich, high quality and contemporary – from the perspective of the combination of elements in the region's food. This cuisine's quality is made up of tangible and intangible elements, which include, among others, the ingredients, the materials used when the food is served, the overall services provided by the people and organisations involved, the systems guaranteeing the products' safety and hygiene standards and the associated facilities and decorative elements.

If these efforts succeed, the necessary conditions will exist to attract traditionally alienated market segments, such as youths, and to keep the loyalty of traditional segments whose potential size is quite substantial. The literature, therefore, indicates that the greatest effort needs to be concentrated on fulfilling the conditions listed in the last part of the previous

paragraph in order to guarantee a high overall quality that is not merely a marketing pitch but also a concrete cultural element that clients can perceive directly.

2. Conceptual evolution of gastronomy as part of cultural heritage

Serra (1996) argues that gastronomy as cultural heritage is, undoubtedly, much more than simply culinary art. Gastronomy is an important vehicle of folk culture, showing how the inhabitants of a specific region live, in a specific time. Along the same lines, the scope of the relationship between diet and culture is clearly not restricted just to the processes connected to the handling of the specialities consumed but also includes table manners and the places and ways in which eating happens. This means that humans' eating patterns are affected by social, economic and technological changes.

The aforementioned traditional cuisine can be identified through observations of certain eating habits and practices that – through their characteristic preparation and consumption patterns and the significance that these have for the communities that practice them – eventually become local symbols. These are the so-called typical dishes that are specialities prepared in specific ways in each region, with connections to history, production conditions and local culture that are “incorporated” into the identity or name of the specialities.

In July 2000, the Council of Ministers passed a resolution to raise Portugal's gastronomy to the official status of cultural heritage. At the time, various business associations reacted to this government decision with declarations of support, which highlighted the significance of this resolution for the business world, because the raising of gastronomy to heritage status allowed it to be dealt with in a much more promising way, attracting new chefs and other stakeholders, motivated to make a contribution to innovation in the field.

Alltogether, it was an important development to promote the use of new techniques, new recipes (and) new experiences but, above all else, to preserve the authenticity of Portuguese gastronomy. The raising of gastronomy to national heritage status also meant that the oldest recipes were recalled, many of which had already disappeared from traditional menus.

2.1 Conceptual evolution of gastronomy as a part of tourism promotion

Typical gastronomy, when presented and reinforced as inherent to a region, becomes a way to reaffirm any identities that need strengthening. Thus, the appreciation and protection of national and regional gastronomic symbols should be upheld as a way to preserve regional

identity. Notably, the relationship that is established between spaces and food production is easily visible and is currently recognised by residents, tourists and holidayers visiting specific places. In terms of tourism activities, to which local differences and particularities are basic raw materials, this gastronomic territoriality is not only encouraged but also widely publicised, as a way to differentiate tourism destinations from their competition. The more differentiated a destination is, the more it will be valued by visitors.

Tourism is made up of socioeconomic and cultural activities that are based on tourists' desires, needs, motivations and expectations. Tourism, therefore, needs to maintain a differentiated offer that resists globalisation tendencies, promoting the offer of typical dishes in hotels and restaurants located in areas with the most tourism. The homogenisation and industrialisation of everyday meals, especially in larger urban centres, result in a cultural dilution that threatens typical local dishes and meals and weakens more traditional cuisines. Specifically, in regard to cultural tourism – a category that can be divided into subareas, including gastronomic tourism – gastronomy, especially typical local gastronomy, deserves a prominent place in tourism not only because it is a cultural asset that deserves to be appreciated, but also because it provides important points of contact between tourists and host regions, offering a “taste” of local rites, values and traditions.

In this context, typical dishes are particularly important, precisely because they refer to more “authentic” and “genuine” experiences. These dishes popularise the cuisine of particular places and draw the attention of the food industry, primarily within the context of tourism.

Labaredas (1995) argues that Portugal contains a centuries-old, rich gastronomy, which can be considered one of the most important in the European continent. Many local authorities and associations have begun gastronomic initiatives – competitions, festivals, samplings, thematic weeks and fairs – to pursue the fundamental objective of publicising and strengthening gastronomic heritage. These organisations have not forgotten that these types of initiatives can improve the economy of the respective municipalities and localities, since these events are a way to attract more visitors. The cited author reports, at the time of the study in question, that independent gastronomic events could be found in 50% of Portuguese municipalities, which shows the interest generated by the various regional cuisines as a way to attract visitors.

2.2 Algarvian gastronomy

Serra (1996) observes that much has changed since the beginning of the 70s, when tourism began to expand and increasingly took on the role of the primary driver of regional economies.

Gastronomic traditions and dietary habits have been influenced by, in addition to the aforementioned factors, some other tendencies that have to do with a progressively more diverse demographic base, interregional migrations and residents' contact with tourists. This has meant that many traditions have been forgotten or challenged, even as others have been "commercialised", "adapted" or simply distorted, depending on the degree to which they have been changed to deal with new realities or commercial interests.

A study carried out by Fernandes (1993) compiled a variety of relevant information in order to understand the geographical and socioeconomic characteristics of the Algarve's central zone in the first half of the 20th century. In this study, the author refers that the soil quality and relative abundance of water determined the type of produce and crops grown, as well as the shaping of the animal husbandry, forestry and other activities.

The cited author also reports that the mountain-ridge farms basically relied on cereals and legumes adapted to an arid climate and that fertile valleys allowed the cultivation of small irrigated fields of potato, maize, vegetables and legumes. In addition, the mountain ridges provided enough vegetation to feed herds that satisfied the locals' need for milk, cheese and meat. Honey and *medronho* (i.e. a brandy made from the fruit of the strawberry tree), which are other mountain products, had a significant economic importance beyond that of household consumption. Fresh cheese with honey and bread with honey-water (i.e. a syrup-like mixture) are still today traditional food eaten by the mountain-ridge people.

In the Barrocal hills, the economic conditions were virtually identical to those in the mountain ridges. Because of the land's characteristics and property structure, locals lived off of small cultivated land parcels (*courelas*) where essentially dry farming was done (i.e. wheat, barley, oats, broad beans and peas). This was indispensable to both the humans and the mules and donkeys' diet and was complemented by harvests of olives and fruit – with the latter dried – and small vegetable gardens cultivated for household consumption.

The animals were used to provide tractive force in farm chores, such as ploughing and water lifting for irrigation, and to transport people and loads, namely, cereals and dried fruit. To minimise soil erosion, many families rented "fourths" (i.e. small parcels of land) to be able to do crop rotation.

The coastal area, where the land was more fertile because of the presence of water sources, could support large-scale agricultural production. Fruit trees were plentiful, including, among others, tangerine, orange, loquat, plum, pomegranate and peach trees.

In fishing centres, the sea's resources provided the main means of livelihood. As fish was the main source of income and food for the coastal communities, locals had to guarantee an abundance of fish even when weather conditions did not allow boats to go out to sea. Thus, the locals resorted to drying and stocking. Drying was done by private individuals, while stocking was done in fishing centres.

Meat played a reduced role in the local diet. Beef was rarely in demand and was considered an exotic food. Poultry, pork and, to a lesser degree, goat and mutton were more often eaten in the urban centres than in the countryside, where practically only poultry and pork were eaten. Normally, every family slaughtered a pig, except for richer households that could kill two or more: one at the beginning of winter to have meat to eat with cabbage and the other at the beginning of summer for the time of harvest.

2.3 Emergent sociocultural aspects

In terms of gastronomy – as happens with many other aspects of culture – the Algarve is quite distinct from the rest of Portugal. In addition to having long and deeply rooted traditions, this region's culture is one of the richest in the country. As one descends from the mountain ridges to the coast, one can find special ways in which the food is cooked and the ingredients are used.

Restaurants and hotels must preserve the main features of Algarvian cuisine, making local specialities part of these establishments' brand image. Rather than resorting to foreign recipes, raising the profile of Algarvian gastronomy needs to be considered a strategic commitment to differentiation and even innovation.

Serra (1996) reports that, from the 80s onwards, changes in eating habits became greater and more visible. Despite this and the many actions that still need to be taken, attempts have been made to recuperate certain authentic traditions that can guarantee the region's uniqueness, differentiating it from other destinations. These traditions should constitute a preferred way to market the region. Unfortunately, examples of inventions still abound that, despite their apparently huge success in the media or even commercial success, need to be more carefully thought out by government and business decision-makers.

3. Methods

The present study used a combination of methods considered acceptable for social science research requiring primary and secondary data collection to meet specific objectives, which in this study was carried out as follows. First, in locations selected for their geographical, heritage and cultural characteristics, unstructured interviews were conducted in order to obtain stories and life experiences considered important to understanding customs and traditions. Second, questionnaires were developed and distributed to tourists/visitors and restaurants. Third, semi-structured interviews were conducted with representatives of official entities and tourism associations, namely, town halls, the Entidade Regional de Tourism do Algarve (Regional Tourism Agency of the Algarve) (ERTA) and business associations (Associação dos Industriais de Hotelaria e Similares do Algarve (Association of Hotel and Related Industries of the Algarve) and Associação de Hotéis e Empreendimentos Turísticos do Algarve (Association of Hotels and Tourism Enterprises of the Algarve)). Last, the data were analysed using statistical techniques.

The survey of tourists was conducted with two groups of 100 individuals selected using random sampling through convenience. The restaurant survey was conducted with two groups of 20 establishments, based on the same random sampling through convenience.

3.1 Information sources

In the first phase of this research, a document search was carried out to enable an a priori deeper understanding of the topic under study. Secondary sources also were used to create the project's framework, as previous studies on similar topics have done.

In the second phase, a questionnaire was developed – with eight closed-ended questions and three open-ended questions – to be distributed to tourists. Another questionnaire with 12 open-ended questions was distributed to restaurant managers/owners to illicit information essential to understanding their cooking methods, ingredients used, the origin of ingredients and the dishes on their menus. In addition, a guide with four questions was written for structured interviews with heads of government agencies and tourism and restaurant associations. The questionnaires administered to restaurant managers were followed up with guided conversations to gather additional information in order to evaluate these managers' knowledge of typical and traditional gastronomy and to determine more clearly what their restaurants offer.

3.2 Treatment of data

The data collected from the two samples were analysed using the statistical software SPSS. The matrix of data was examined using only valid instances, with any non-responses and all other similar situations considered missing values. After all the information was processed, the next step was to analyse and select the results with which to continue this research.

3.3 Definition and creation of itineraries

The creation of itineraries is a tourism marketing initiative normally developed by tour operators or tourism marketing organisations. These routes consist of itineraries that tourists can follow during their stay in specific destinations.

In addition to other features, these routes need to include the most background information and attractions possible to match the interests and meeting expectations of potential clients, whose profiles should be determined previously. The quality of itineraries is directly related to its proper design, and these routes help determine tourists' choices during their stay in terms of the activities in which they engage.

There is, currently, no official classification system for routes, but they need to take into account geographical characteristics in association with other elements that contribute to the area's identity, namely, typical products, cultural sites, unique landscapes or production facilities. Thematic itineraries are a good example of this, since they are based on the identification of specific resources that can be offered as experiences composed of tangible and intangible elements. These can have an identity like that of a product, being equally amenable to being promoted and sold. Therefore, thematic routes can be an important way to enhance tourists' experiences during their stay, helping to sustaining a positive, well-established image of tourism destinations. Serra *et al.* (2003) created two itineraries based on geographical and sociological criteria, which served as reference points for the present study during the fieldwork.

4. Results

Itinerary 1 begins in Tavira and ends in Alcoutim, and Itinerary 2 starts in Faro and finishes in Querença. In terms of their features, both run between the coast and the mountain ridges, passing through Barrocal-hill areas. The routes are relatively homogenous in terms of geography, but the sociological characteristics are quite different along both itineraries, which

makes them particularly interesting in regard to gastronomy, handcrafts and even indigenous production.



Figure 1. Távira to Alcoutim itinerary 1

Region: The Algarve – Sotavento

Areas covered: Coast, Barrocal hills and mountain ridges

Source: Serra *et al.*, 2003



Figure 2. Faro to Querença itinerary 2

Region: The Algarve – Sotavento

Areas covered: Coast, Barrocal hills and mountain ridges

Source: Serra *et al.*, 2003

4.1 Tourist survey results related to Itinerary 1 (from Tavira to Alcoutim)

Based on the answers given in the tourist survey regarding Itinerary 1, the following statements can be made about the respondents:

- 36% are Portuguese, followed by the British (34%), Dutch (16%) and Germans and other nationalities (14%).
- 58% were visiting the Algarve for the first time, mainly for the following reasons:
 - The climate/beaches
 - Prices
 - Recreation/contact with nature
 - The region's heritage/culture, including gastronomy
- 36% consider the local traditional gastronomy an important factor in their choice of this destination.
- 63% reported having some knowledge of typical Algarvian dishes and confectionaries.
- 86% report that tourism itineraries are extremely useful and greatly facilitate finding out more about the region.

4.2 Tourist survey results related to Itinerary 2 (from Faro to Querença)

The respondents who filled out the questionnaire referring to Itinerary 2 provided the following information about themselves:

- 28% are Portuguese, followed by the British (36%), Germans (16%) and Irish and other nationalities (20%).
- 52% were visiting the Algarve for the first time, mainly for the following reasons:
 - The climate/beaches
 - Sport activities (i.e. golf)
 - Prices
 - The region's heritage/culture, including gastronomy
- 40% consider the local traditional gastronomy an important factor in their choice of this destination.
- 54% reported some knowledge of typical Algarvian dishes and confectionaries.
- 62% reported that tourism itineraries are extremely useful and greatly facilitate finding out more about the region.

4.3 Restaurant survey results related to Itinerary 1 (from Tavira to Alcoutim)

Based on the responses of managers/owners contacted in the survey regarding Itinerary 1, the following statements can be made about these restaurants:

- 80% are already included in gastronomic routes publicised by town halls, the ERTA and other entities.
- The typical dishes most often offered by restaurants are:
 - Grilled fish or meat
 - Seafood dishes
 - Game dishes
- The most popular dishes are:
 - *Açordas* (bread-based stew)
 - Grilled meats
 - Seafood rice
- In terms of participation in gastronomic fairs/festivals:
 - 70% do not join these kinds of initiatives.
 - 30% participate and acknowledge that these events help promote their restaurant.
 - Despite the low level of participation, around 14% that have not yet joined such events intend to do so in the future.

4.4 Restaurant survey results regarding Itinerary 2 (from Faro to Querença)

Based on the information given by managers/owners contacted for the survey about Itinerary 2, the following observations can be made about these restaurants:

- 77% are already included in gastronomic routes promoted by town halls, the ERTA and other entities.
- The typical dishes most often offered by restaurants are:
 - Grilled meat and fish
 - Corn meal with meat
 - Gazpacho with sardines
- The most popular dishes are:
 - Poultry dishes such as home-raised cockerel
 - Grilled meat and fish

- Razor clam rice and *cataplanas* (lidded casseroles traditionally made from copper)
- In terms of participation in gastronomic fairs/festivals:
 - 60% do not join these types of initiatives.
 - 40% participate and recognise that these help to promote their restaurant.
 - 53% of those that have not yet participated intend to do so in the future.

The authenticity of Algarvian gastronomy, for these restaurant owners, has mostly been safeguarded by recipes passed down to them by their grandmothers and mothers. The concept of a typical Algarvian cuisine, especially for the Barrocal-hill restaurants, is a combination or mixture of mountain-ridge dishes – influenced by the Alentejo region – and coastal dishes. This cuisine also preserves Algarvian customs and traditions through local products.

Sometimes, individuals from the community, such as fishermen, also work together with the restaurants, teaching them how to cook specialities that have been forgotten. One of the restaurants surveyed researched traditional dishes that had been largely forgotten, and some of these became part of their regular menu. Both Portuguese and foreign tourists, according to the restaurants surveyed, want this type of food, and, notably, Portuguese tourists are increasingly interested in traditional Algarvian food.

All the restaurants surveyed feel that it is worthwhile maintaining traditional Algarvian gastronomy so that this can be preserved for, and appreciated by, future generations. All of the restaurateurs also greatly enjoy this type of activity.

Variables	1 Tavira-Alcoutim	2 Faro-Querença	Dif. 1>2
Portuguese	36%	28%	
English	34%	36%	
Dutch	16%	-	No comparison
German and others	14%	-	No comparison
German	-	16%	No comparison
Irish and others	-	20%	No comparison
First visit	58%	52%	
Main motivations			
Weather/ beach	1 st	1 st	
Price	2 nd	2 nd	
Leisure/ contact with Nature	3 rd	-	No comparison
Heritage/ culture (including gastronomy)	4 th	4 th	

Sports activities (golf)	-	2 nd	No comparison
Interviewed who consider the traditional gastronomy an influencing factor in the destiny choice	36%	40%	
Interviewed who affirm having some knowledge about the typical Algarvian dishes and pastry	63%	54%	
Interviewed who affirm the touristical routes have great utility and facilitate the knowledge about any region	86%	72%	

Figure 3. Chart comparing tourists' answers by itinerary

Source: Author

4.5 Interviews of representatives of government agencies and associations

The interviews conducted with representatives of local and central authorities, as well as representatives of regional associations involved in the issue of traditional gastronomy, revealed that the interviewees assert that traditional Algarvian gastronomy is extremely important. It plays a significant role in the Algarve tourism product, as shown by the following interview excerpts:

- "The gastronomic offer needs to evolve as a part of the Algarve products that can represent the region and differentiate it from other destinations."
- "Traditional Algarvian gastronomy is a 'hidden complement' to the Algarve tourism product. In relation to Portuguese tourists, gastronomic festivals are increasingly important and work very well."
- "The traditional Algarvian gastronomy is very important from the perspective of offer – as a tourism product. The mountain-ridge zone with its products should be more publicised, and this publicity needs to be accompanied by other measures, namely, promotions of visits to the mountain ridges and the most interesting places there."
- "The Algarve tourism product – even though some attempts have already been made to change this – continues to be based on sun and sea. Not only should the quality of dishes offered be improved, but also the quality of services. The consumption of regional dishes needs to be encouraged from a local culture perspective, which, in my opinion, has nearly been lost with the influx of other regions and countries' cultural influences."

- “Gastronomy is an integral part of our cultural heritage and a means of transmitting popular culture.”

5. Conclusions and recommendations

The above results confirm that traditional Algarvian gastronomy is, in fact, a form of cultural heritage. It is part of the traditions and way of life of the people of the Algarve region. This cuisine has been inherited from previous generations, and attempts are being made to preserve it so that subsequent generations will be able to recognise – in addition to their ancestors’ other customs – all the types of food and products that make up Algarvian cuisine.

Currently, a rebirth of traditional gastronomy can be seen, as well as a desire to transmit these traditional flavours to the people who come in search of what the Algarve has to offer and who are interested in the region’s culture and customs. All the entities contacted are unanimous in affirming that traditional Algarvian gastronomy is winning over increasing numbers of fans and that various restaurants already exist that offer a quite good quality of traditional food. Thus, the region’s gastronomic offer needs to evolve further as a part of the Algarve tourism product, contributing to differentiating this region from other destinations.

This study confirms that gastronomy is an important factor in tourists’ satisfaction levels. However, a wider and deeper study of tourists’ gastronomic preferences needs to be conducted, which could further raise the profile of traditional Algarvian gastronomy and its contribution to tourists’ overall satisfaction with their experiences in the Algarve as a tourism destination par excellence.

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