



## Article

# Culinary Tourism as An Effective Strategy for a Profitable Cooperation between Agriculture and Tourism

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**Abstract:** The relationships between tourism and agriculture have traditionally been studied due to the positive impacts they can potentially have on the development of rural economies. This research puts forward a new interpretation of the cooperation between these two sectors, involving culinary tourism as a key factor. An empirical study was carried out and 720 tourists were interviewed while visiting the city of Cáceres, Extremadura, in south-western Spain. Results show that (i) food and traditional gastronomy are the main motivators of modern tourists, (ii) their income level is above average, (iii) tourists who travel with a culinary motivation are more likely to consume, in their daily diet, traditional products from the visited destination, generating positive impacts to the destination over the long term. The paper reaches significant conclusions on the management and marketing of destinations and the development of traditional rural economies.

**Keywords:** culinary tourism; rural economies; agriculture; tourism management; rural development

## 1. Introduction

In recent decades, traditional agriculture has undergone a deep crisis ([Hernández-Mogollón et al. 2011a](#)). With the objective of improving efficiency and sustainability, traditional rural economies have been provided with new perspectives and opportunities for growth ([Hernández-Mogollón et al. 2011b](#); [Opperman 1996](#); [Sharpley 2002](#)). Strategic alliances with other sectors have been established to take advantage of the diversification of the original agricultural and stockbreeding activities, turning them into other profitable businesses ([Busby and Rendle 2000](#); [Millán et al. 2014](#); [Fleischer and Pizam 1997](#)).

Tourism, being a very wide field, is capable of facilitating transversal cooperation ([Barbieri 2013](#); [Fleischer and Tchetchik 2005](#); [McGehee and Kim 2004](#); [Sharpley and Vass 2006](#)).

From a touristic perspective, links between tourism and agriculture have been encouraged by two phenomena: (i) the decline of “sun and sand” tourism, which has opened a new wide range of tourism destinations and activities ([Cavaco 1995](#); [Hernández-Mogollón et al. 2011a](#); [Sharpley 2002](#)); and (ii) the evolution of tourists’ needs and preferences, with increasing interest in living authentic experiences, with cultural, educational and participative content ([Di Domenico and Miller 2012](#); [Kastenholz 2010](#); [Kastenholz et al. 2012](#)).

From an academic, political and practical point of view, the connection between agriculture and tourism has been strongly emphasized as an opportunity to achieve the sustainability of

agriculture-based economies and the social revitalization of rural communities (Everett and Slocum 2013b; Hummelbrunner and Miglbauer 1994; Kieselbach and Long 1990).

Many authors highlight the contradictions of the strategic cooperation of these two sectors (Di Domenico and Miller 2012; Everett and Slocum 2013a; Fleischer and Pizam 1997; Hjalager 1996; Sharpley 2002). Tourism can be an impactful activity in rural contexts where often the social, environmental, and economic equilibrium is granted by the small-scale dimension of local companies, the low-density rate of population, and the high environmental quality of ecosystems. Therefore, its development in rural areas has to be consciously planned in order to avoid turning tourism into a high-impact activity, which can undermine the authenticity and sustainability of local rural economies. According to Scheyvens and Laeis (2019), the risks that tourism entails for local food production have to be seen in the promotion of agricultural production aimed towards exports, urbanization, the decline in agrobiodiversity, and the globalization of food preferences, that is, a growing interest in imported foods and culinary habits (Thaman 2008; Thow et al. 2010).

Without rejecting successful cases (Nilsson 2002; Pilar et al. 2012; Turner et al. 2003; Ventura and Milone 2000), it is noteworthy that cooperation between the two sectors is not easy. Entrepreneurs and managers from both fields have to face limitations related to the difficulty of sharing the same environment and resources (Telfer and Wall 1996), pursuing originally different goals: tourist satisfaction on the one hand, and agricultural business efficiency, on the other.

Diversification and business hybridization have been considered the best options to link agriculture and tourism in an attempt to pursue a mutually beneficial result (an increase in profitability for both industries through inter-sectorial cooperation) (Millán et al. 2014). Clear examples of tourism/agriculture cooperation are agritourism or farm-tourism activities, which require multi-functionality of traditional rural businesses and multitasking professionals. Thus, in practice, it is difficult to satisfy and successfully maintain these requirements (Hjalager 1996; Kizos 2010; Kizos and Iosifides 2007; Sharpley 2002).

With this in mind, it is necessary to explore new areas of cooperation, capable of overcoming the limitations of agri-business diversification.

The present research adopts the hypothesis that culinary tourism and traditional, high-quality food can be considered a nexus of union for a profitable interaction between tourism and agriculture. Nowadays, food tourism represents a new typology chosen by an increasing number of travelers, providing them with a sensory and emotional experience capable of satisfying their desires (Fox 2007; López-Guzmán and Sánchez-Cañizares 2012; Richards 2002; Sánchez-Cañizares and López-Guzmán 2011). On the other hand, the attention given to the quality of food and to local gastronomy puts forward new opportunities for the development and growth of small-scale agricultural businesses (Carrillo et al. 2013; Rinaldi 2017). Tourists traveling with a gastronomic motivation are, in fact, interested in tasting local products and when given the opportunity, are likely to become regular consumers of the specialties of the destination visited in their place of origin, that is, beyond the time and the location of their holidays (Di-Clemente et al. 2019a, 2019b).

The main objective of this research is to test whether tourism initiatives, based on local gastronomy, are valuable tools for the enhancement of the agriculture-tourism cooperation and rural economies in the long term.

To achieve this goal, an empirical study was carried out, collecting 720 questionnaires from tourists dining at touristic restaurants of the city of Cáceres, in the Spanish region of Extremadura. The geographical area chosen has an economy based on agricultural activities, which have been recently diversified into tourism. The majority of the certified products of the region are produced in the area selected as the study context (Ortega et al. 2012).

The results, more than confirming the importance of gastronomy as a motivational element, shed new light on a trend associated with culinary tourism: the tourists' habit of consuming, at home, the local products of the destination visited as a consequence of the culinary experience lived during their holidays.

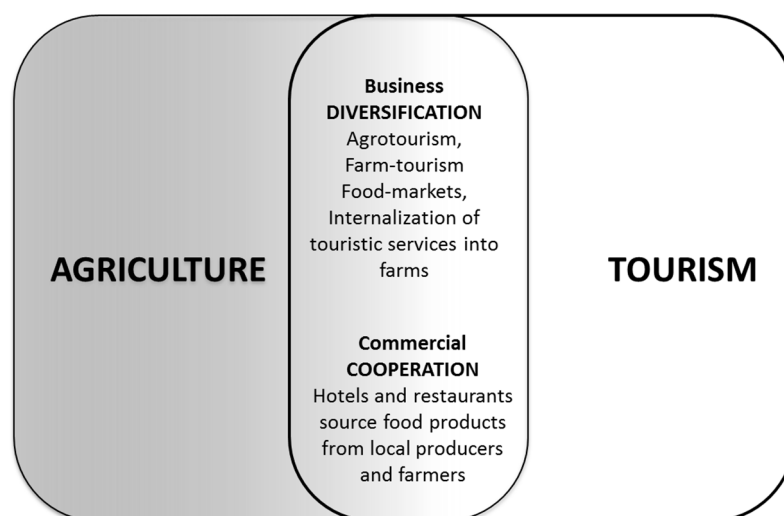
This aspect points out the potential benefits that high-quality gastronomy and foods can generate in the long term for both the tourism and the agricultural industries (Espejel et al. 2008; Espejel and Fandos 2009).

The paper has been structured into five sections. After this introduction, the literature review is presented. In the third section, the methodology adopted and the research setting is described. Sections 4 and 5 present the results and main conclusions, respectively. To finalize, references are detailed.

## 2. Literature Review

### 2.1. Agriculture and Tourism

Connections between agriculture and tourism have been studied from different perspectives: economic (Barbieri and Mahoney 2009; Khanal et al. 2020; Getz and Carlsen 2000; Tew and Barbieri 2012), environmental and agricultural (Clarke 1996; Di Domenico and Miller 2012; Telfer and Wall 1996; Westhoek et al. 2013), tourism (Busby and Rendle 2000; Hernández-Mogollón et al. 2011a; Leco et al. 2013) and rural sociology (Iacovidou and Turner 1995; Sharpley 2002; Tew and Barbieri 2012). Nevertheless, it is worth noting that beyond the focus adopted, the relationship between agriculture and tourism has been traditionally conceived in relation to its potential for generating positive externalities for rural economies (McNally 2001; Sharpley 2002; Turner et al. 2003). Thus, tourism activities have been seen as a complement of agricultural income and, as such, have erroneously been interpreted as the panacea for all the problems in rural areas (Hernández-Mogollón et al. 2011a). The relationships which link agriculture and tourism can be studied and analyzed from two general approaches: business diversification and food-sourcing commercial cooperation (see Figure 1).



**Figure 1.** The two approaches to cooperation between agriculture and tourism. Source: own elaboration.

Business diversification is a strategy for agricultural enterprises to face the changes that agriculture has recently undergone (Barbieri and Mahoney 2009; Ilbery 1991). This approach has given birth to various initiatives, from farm and rural stays to agritourism and farm participation (Kizos 2010). From a practical point of view, this approach endures limitations with regard to the peaceful and effective collaboration among farmers, tourists, and local tour operators (Dougherty and Green 2011; Hjalager 1996; Phelan and Sharpley 2011). According to Telfer and Wall 1996, the relationship between tourism and agriculture is characterized by distinct aspects. Incompatible and conflicted, on the one hand, due to the competition for the use of the same resources (land, spaces, human and financial capital), and interdependent, on the other, when there are agritourism activities which positively impact both sectors.

With regard to the second approach, Rogerson (2012) analyses the agriculture–tourism relationship from the perspective of commercial cooperation. This approach considers farmers and agricultural entrepreneurs as food suppliers for local hotels and restaurants. This kind of cooperation overcomes the difficulties associated with business diversification, as every agent acts in their professional field (Kizos 2010; Kizos and Iosifides 2007). However, it sets out another range of problems, such as an insufficient volume of production, lack of economies of scale, and uncertain supply and services. All of these mean that hotels and restaurants would rather source food from large-scale suppliers, distant from the destination, and in so doing, severely reduce the positive impact that tourism can have on local agriculture (Pillay and Rogerson 2013; Rogerson 2012).

Following the two approaches proposed, multiple cooperation initiatives have been put into practice by enterprises from both sectors. These can be characterized by different levels of intensity, being strong and sustainable when both sectors benefit from the cooperation, and weak when the cooperation generates divergent effects in the two sectors: negatives or null for one and positive for the other.

The diversity of the effects experienced by the two sectors (traditional agriculture and tourism) gives rise to a weak relationship. In fact, over the medium/long term, the sector recording negative or null effects will either collapse or cease to invest in the relationship (see Table 1).

**Table 1.** Categories of intersectoral relationships between agriculture and tourism.

INTENSITY TYPOLOGY	STRONG		WEAK
	+	-	+/-
DIVERSIFICATION	Successful business diversification, i.e., agritourism	Conflicted or null relationship	Cooperation generates positive effects for one sector and negative or null ones for the other.
COMMERCIAL COOPERATION	Commercial cooperation, favorable to both sectors	Conflicted or null relationship	

Source: Own Elaboration.

When positive results are experienced by both sectors, this means that expected benefits, which have motivated the efforts invested in the cooperation, have been achieved (Barbieri and Mahoney 2009; Getz and Carlsen 2000; McGehee and Kim 2004).

McElwee (2006) states that, even if many agricultural entrepreneurs recognize the potential benefits that come from business diversification in tourism, at the same time, they lack the professional skills required to successfully manage such a complex agri-touristic activity.

In addition, the difficulty of complying with the sweetened and idyllic vision that the tourist retains of the farms and rural activities has been accounted for (Nilsson 2002).

This preconceived image generates expectations in the tourist consumer, which cannot be met without partially altering the authenticity of the experience (Di Domenico and Miller 2012; Kastenholz et al. 2012).

Thus, in practice, farmers who want to complement their original profession, offering touristic services, will face the need to re-purpose a farm setting to meet the tourists' needs and desires, incurring new demands for physical, financial, and human resources.

The approach of indirect strong, positive relationships also presents important practical limitations. First, the small size of the traditional agricultural and farm businesses determines reduced volumes of production, which is usually insufficient to supply, with competitive prices and quality, the tourism enterprises (Pillay and Rogerson 2013; Rogerson 2012). Local restaurants and hotels end up purchasing from large-scale suppliers, resulting in a territorial dispersion of the incoming cash-flows generated by tourism and wasting potential intersectoral synergies.

## 2.2. Tourism, Gastronomy, and Agriculture

Considering the limitations that make it difficult to achieve beneficial cooperation between agriculture and tourism through the mechanisms of diversification and commercial cooperation, it is

necessary to find new ways to successfully link the two sectors. The increasing interest that consumers have in food quality and traditional gastronomy (Berbel-Pineda et al. 2019) represents a new boost for the intersectoral cooperation between agriculture and tourism (Millán et al. 2014). Culinary tourism has started to be seen as a new opportunity for local producers to get in contact with consumers (Fanelli 2019; Folgado-Fernández et al. 2019). The practice of this emerging tourism typology can generate multiple benefits, overcoming the obstacles experienced with the actual form of cooperation between the two sectors (diversification and food sourcing).

Baldacchino (2015) considers the recent interest in food as a strengthening tool for fragile rural economies. Similarly, Sidali et al. (2011, 2015) consider the rural context as a perfect scenario for the implementation of food-based tourism practices due to the strong gastronomic identity that usually characterizes these areas. Moreover, rural regions are the places where food production is initiated and where the elaboration of local foods takes place. Silkes (2012) considers culinary tourism as an activity focused on farmers' markets that can contribute to rural sustainability as being a unique niche of culinary tourism.

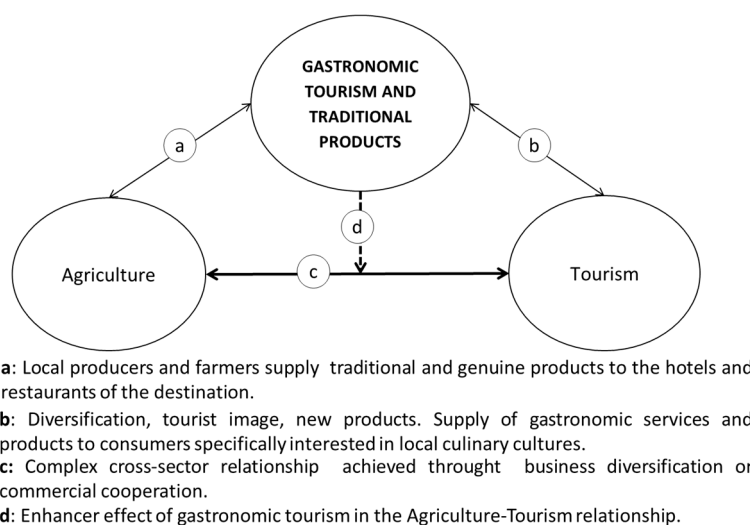
Previous research has already corroborated the idea that culinary habits are undergoing a major change in favor of quality, authenticity, and morality of food (MacDonald 2013; Petrini 2001; Stringfellow et al. 2013). Biénabe et al. (2011) refer to this phenomenon as "the quality turn". The rapid rise of culinary tourism is an effect of this new trend, as it is a touristic typology capable of satisfying an increasing demand of sensorial food-based experiences (Fox 2007; Hall et al. 2003; López-Guzmán and Sánchez-Cañizares 2012; Millán et al. 2011).

Recently, the interest of tourists in local and traditional foods has turned into one of the most common and major motivators for traveling to a certain destination (Hall and Gössling 2013). Traditional foods and dishes, especially those certified by quality marks (Millán et al. 2017), have become new touristic attractions and resources, influencing the selection of the destination, the buying intentions, and food consumption, both during the holidays and in daily life (Espejel et al. 2008; Espejel and Fandos 2009).

Travelers with a specific culinary motivation represent a "golden segment" in tourism marketing. Previous researches have demonstrated that these consumers have a purchasing power above average (López-Guzmán and Sánchez-Cañizares 2012). Moreover, the so-called "foodies" (Fox 2007) are new potential clients for traditional small-scale farmers, in particular for those who have their product accredited with quality labels such as Protected Designation of Origin (PDO) and Protected Geographical Indication (PGI), among others.

López-Guzmán and Sánchez-Cañizares (2012) state that, beyond its motivating role, gastronomy is a component of the holiday that generates pleasant memories. The desire to relive positive experiences through food leads many tourists to consume again, and from home, the products tasted at the destination. The online market and modern distribution systems encourage the mobility of products from small-scale local markets to consumer households. In this way, small producers can enter new markets and find new clients. The culinary experience can then be considered an opportunity for farmers to promote their products to new potential markets and achieve regular clients who are likely to keep purchasing from their place of origin (Stone et al. 2018). Thus, food-based tourism is the factor linking agriculture and tourism and is an enhancer of the profitability and the economic sustainability of both sectors (see Figure 2).





**Figure 2.** The role of the local gastronomy in the trinominal relationship between agriculture–gastronomy–tourism. Source: own elaboration.

### 3. Materials and Methods

This research investigates the potentiality of culinary tourism as an enhancer of the relationship between small-scale agriculture and tourism. The research questions that the study will seek to answer are the following:

- Is traditional gastronomy a determinant motivating factor for modern tourists?
- Does a relationship exist between the gastronomic motivation to travel and the consumption of local food of the destination visited, from the place of origin of the tourists?
- Do the tourists who travel with a gastronomic motivation represent a “golden market segment” due to their high purchasing power?

#### 3.1. Description of the Area

The selected scenario to carry out this research study is the city of Cáceres, in the South Western region of Extremadura, Spain. It is considered to be a representative destination for cultural tourism in a national context and one of the most populous urban areas of the region, with 95,925 inhabitants ([National Statistics Institute of Spain NSI](#)).

Its economy is primarily based on the service sector, which is principally tourism. The city was declared a World Heritage Site by UNESCO in 1986, which implies that the city offers a great deal of cultural resources. Its old town is recognized as one of the best historical sites in Spain, having been referred to as one of the best-preserved places ([Ortega et al. 2012](#)).

The city boasts a rich gastronomical identity and several well-regarded restaurants offering traditional gastronomy and a wide range of local products awarded with quality labels such as PDO and PGI ([Ortega et al. 2012](#)). Among them, the following ones are worth mentioning: Dehesa de Extremadura cured ham, cherries from the Jerte Valley, Gata-Hurdes olive oil, Villuercas-Ibores honey, Torta del Casar cheese, Ibores cheese, paprika from La Vera ([Ortega et al. 2012](#)).

These are produced in the rural areas surrounding the city of Cáceres and get their special organoleptic qualities from the local climate and from traditional production processes.

Game meat is a distinctive element of the local culinary culture ([Ortega et al. 2012](#)); nevertheless, the star-product is the Iberian pig and all its derivatives.

Together with high quality food, Cáceres offers a wide range of restaurants, some of them recommended by national and international renowned gastronomic guidebooks, such as the Michelin

Guide (Michelin 2019). The majority of the restaurants are located in the historical part of the city, offering a privileged setting in which to enjoy the local gastronomy.

### 3.2. Survey and Procedures

The empirical study carried out aimed at profiling the tourists who visit the city of Cáceres, giving particular attention to the declared interest in local gastronomy as the main motivation to visit the destination. Moreover, the research attempted to identify the consumption habits of tourists with regard to products from Extremadura in their place of residence.

From a methodological perspective, following an exploratory approach, 720 tourists were surveyed using an ad hoc questionnaire based on a number of previous works (Ignatov and Smith 2006; Okumus et al. 2007) measuring five aspects: social-demographic characteristics of the tourist; economic level, motivations or main reasons for visiting Cáceres to verify whether gastronomy was a germane attractor; feedbacks about their opinions on the local culinary experience; opinions and consumption habits in order to know if the gastronomic motivation to visit the destination determines a higher likelihood of consuming local products from the place of origin. The questionnaire was validated through a pre-test submitted to 12 respondents.

The authors considered that the best place to conduct the survey was the typical restaurants of the city, as this would reinforce the quality of the research and the results obtained. Thirteen restaurants had been previously selected by the authors on the basis of two conditions: location and menus. According to them, the restaurants should be placed in historical and tourist parts of the city and should include local products and traditional dishes in their menus.

Tourists enquired were intercepted at the moment they had just finished lunch or dinner, so their culinary experience was assured to be fresh in their minds.

A non-probability sampling strategy of convenience was used. The sample universe was composed of all the tourists of the city of Cáceres. The field-work was conducted during the months of April and May of 2012. The response rate was 100%, as the pollsters did personally conduct and supervise the survey. The technical details of the research are shown in Table 2 below.

**Table 2.** Technical details of the research.

<b>Universe</b>	Tourists of the city of Cáceres
<b>Sample</b>	720 surveys
<b>Place of data collection</b>	Traditional restaurants of city of Cáceres
<b>Sampling technique</b>	Non-probability sampling of convenience
<b>Fieldwork realization</b>	April–May 2012
<b>Control of the sample</b>	Implementation and supervision of fieldwork by the authors of the research
<b>Response rate</b>	100%

Source: Own Elaboration.

Data collected were treated with SPSS, version 19.0, and analyzed using univariant and bivariate statistical tools. Apart from descriptive statistics, T-tests and Spearman correlations were performed.

## 4. Results

### 4.1. General Characteristics of The Sample

Gender distribution is quite balanced, as 49.4% of the respondents were males and 50.6% female. The majority of tourists surveyed were in the age range of 40–49 (23.8%), closely followed by those in the range of 30–39 (22.5%) and 50–59 (23.4%).

The educational level was high, with 57.5% of the sample having a University degree. Respondents came from 153 different cities, mainly Madrid and Valencia, and 16 countries, with France the most numerous among the foreign tourists, followed by Portuguese and Italian travelers. It is worth noting that the majority of the sample (30.9%) has a high income level, over 2000€ per month, which indicates an above-average purchasing power (Table 3).

**Table 3.** Socio-demographic characteristics of the tourist visiting the city of Cáceres.

Variable	Items	N	%
<b>Gender</b> <b>N = 693</b>	Men	342	49.4
	Women	351	50.6
<b>Age</b> <b>N = 710</b>	<30	111	15.6
	30–39	160	22.5
	40–49	169	23.8
	50–59	166	23.4
	60 or >60	104	14.6
<b>Origin</b> <b>N = 699</b>	Spain	635	90.8
	Other countries	64	9.2
<b>Education</b> <b>N = 701</b>	Technical School	89	12.7
	High School or less	209	29.8
	University Degree	403	57.5
<b>Income</b> <b>N = 595</b>	<1000 €	108	18.2
	1000–1500 €	158	26.6
	1501–2000 €	145	24.4
	>2000 €	184	30.9

Source: own elaboration.

In relation to the length of stay, 37.1% of the respondents stated that they were spending one night in the city, which defines Cáceres as a weekend destination. Most respondents were traveling accompanied by their partner (43.5%) or with colleagues and/or friends (32.2%).

A similar proportion exists between those tourists who visit Cáceres for the first time (48.1%) and returning visitors (51.9%).

#### 4.2. Culinary Experience

In relation to the local gastronomy, respondents were asked which traditional products and dishes were the most well-known and which ones they most appreciated (see Table 4). A Spearman's correlation was run to determine the relationship between the knowledge and the preference of the six products selected for the study (Jamón  $r = 0.293$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ; Torta del Casar:  $0.540$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ; Traditional Frite r:  $0.528$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ; Pork r:  $0.401$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ; Game r:  $0.356$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ; Migas r:  $0.379$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ). In accordance with the findings of previous research (Cordell 1992; Chiou et al. 2002), results here suggest that the best-known food are also the most appreciated by tourists. This information has important implications for the understanding of the tourist's decision processes and buying intentions.

**Table 4.** Knowledge and preferences about Cáceres traditional products.

	Variable				Spearman Correlation		
	Knowledge		Preference				
Items	N	%	N	%	N	R	p-Values
Cured Iberian Ham	592	82.2	548	76.1	720	0.293	0.001
Torta del Casar Cheese	544	75.6	363	50.4	720	0.540	0.001
Migas (traditional fried bread crumbs)	459	63.8	240	33.3	720	0.379	0.001
Pork	272	37.8	95	13.2	720	0.401	0.001
Game	209	29.0	68	9.4	720	0.356	0.001
Traditional Frite extremeño	142	19.7	61	8.5	720	0.528	0.001
Others	85	11.8	39	5.4	-	-	-

Source: own elaboration.

With the objective of giving a response to the research questions aforementioned, the following variables were analyzed: motivations for traveling, consumption habits of local products in the place of origin, and income levels.

Motivational items were measured with a five-point Likert scale, with 1 being unimportant and 5 extremely important (see Table 5).



**Table 5.** Motivations for traveling to Cáceres.

Motives	Mean	Min.	Max.	Stand. Dev.
Culture	4.07	1	5	1.138
Enjoy local gastronomy	3.90	1	5	1.144
Rest and relax	3.40	1	5	1.432
Leisure and adventure	3.39	1	5	1.289
Visit friends and relatives	2.39	1	5	1.703
Educational purpose	2.25	1	5	1.424
I only pass by Cáceres to get to my final destination	2.14	1	5	1.538
Sports	1.84	1	5	1.409
Business and work	1.75	1	5	1.352
Medical purpose	1.34	1	5	0.936

Source: own elaboration.

As shown in Table 5, gastronomy is the second most important reason for visiting Cáceres (mean: 3.9), with culture being the first, having a slight advantage (mean: 4.07).

Additionally, 90% of respondents were culinary tourists as they stated that gastronomy represented an “important”, “quite important” or “extremely important” reason for traveling (see Table 6). This result confirms a positive response to the first research question, arguing that gastronomy plays a significant role in the destination selection process.

**Table 6.** Gastronomic motivation.

Scale	%	Mean	Min.	Max.	Stand. Dev.
Not at all important	6.4				
Slightly important	4.1				
Important	20.2	3.90	1	5	1.144
Quite important	32.0				
Extremely important	37.3				

Source: own elaboration.

The majority (90% approx.) of the tourists, who travel with a culinary motivation, declared they consume, often or sometimes, local products of the destination visited, in their place of origin (see Table 7).

**Table 7.** Contingency between gastronomic motivation to travel and consumption habits of local products.

		Consumption Habits of Local Products				Total
		Often	Sometimes	Almost Never	Never	
Culinary motivation	Not at all important	31.4%	25.7%	14.3%	28.6%	100%
	Slightly important	25.0%	25.0%	20.8%	29.2%	100%
	Important	27.8%	40.9%	11.3%	20.0%	100%
	Quite important	26.5%	50.3%	10.3%	13.0%	100%
	Extremely important	30.2%	44.2%	13.5%	12.1%	100%
Total		28.4%	43.6%	12.4%	15.7%	100%

Source: own elaboration.

These results highlight a relationship between the gastronomic motivation to travel and the habit of consuming (with a major or minor frequency) local products from the destination visited, once back home.

In this study, the habit of consuming traditional foods from the destination visited in daily life is considered a good proxy of the positive economic impacts that culinary tourism may have, not only on tourism but also on the local agri-food sector. Thus, the use of traditional food in the daily diet of consumers, as a result of a food experience lived during a holiday, encourages the purchase of

local foods from the place of origin and in the long term, positively impacting the small-scale rural economies, producers, and farmers. To test whether gastronomic motivation has an effective influence on consumption habits, the sample was split into two groups according to the importance given by respondents to gastronomy as a motivational factor.

Group 1 includes tourists who considered gastronomy as a minor motivator, scoring it with 1 or 2 values on a five-point Likert scale. Group 2 was composed of those respondents who considered gastronomy as an influential reason for traveling (scoring 3, 4, and 5 on a 5-points Likert scale) and who could, therefore, be identified as culinary tourists.

The significance of the difference in the frequency of consumption of local products between the two groups has been tested with a *t*-test for independent samples. Group statistics and test results are shown in Table 8 below.

**Table 8.** Group statistics about the consumption of local products-gastronomic motivation to travel.

Variables		Type of Tourist	N	Mean	Stand. Dev.	Typical Error	<i>p</i> -Value Independent Samples Test	Result
Satisfaction with attributes of local gastronomy	consumption of local products	Non gastronomic Gastronomic	59 515	2.46 2.12	1.194 0.978	0.155 0.043	0.039	Significant
	Quality of dishes	Non gastronomic	47	3.60	1.035	0.151	0.004	Significant
		Gastronomic	432	4.06	0.798	0.038		
	Prices	Non gastronomic	47	3.32	1.065	0.155	0.159	Not Significant
		Gastronomic	425	3.52	0.898	0.044		
	Infrastructures	Non gastronomic	48	3.71	0.988	0.143	0.360	Not Significant
		Gastronomic	408	3.83	0.882	0.044		
	Atmosphere	Non gastronomic	48	3.77	1.036	0.150	0.652	Not Significant
		Gastronomic	441	3.84	0.893	0.043		
	Innovation	Non gastronomic	40	3.23	1.097	0.174	0.024	Significant
Gastronomic		383	3.61	1.019	0.052			
Hospitality	Non gastronomic	51	3.96	0.916	0.128	0.085	Significant	
	Gastronomic	445	4.18	0.831	0.039			
Traditional gastronomy	Non gastronomic	46	3.91	1.050	0.155	0.007	Significant	
	Gastronomic	433	4.28	0.848	0.041			
Satisfaction with the gastronomic experience	Non gastronomic	56	3.84	0.930	0.124	0.020	Significant	
	Gastronomic	491	4.15	0.776	0.035			
Overall satisfaction with the trip	Non gastronomic	56	4.13	0.764	0.102	0.019	Significant	
	Gastronomic	505	4.38	0.683	0.030			
Incomes	Non gastronomic	51	2.24	1.088	0.152	0.004	Significant	
	Gastronomic	451	2.71	1.100	0.052			

Source: own elaboration.

*p*-values show that significant differences exist between the two groups considered (*p*-values < 0.05) except in relation to the variables of prices, infrastructure, and atmosphere. The equivalence of means on these three aspects underlines that respondents of the two groups express similar opinions with no differences in whether the motivation for the trip was experiencing local cuisine or not. However, on the bases of the test performed, it is possible to assume that the two groups are significantly different. Considering the objective of this work, *t*-test results for the variable of consumption habits of local products are particularly important. The mean difference can be considered statistically significant (*p*-value 0.039 < 0.05). It is possible to conclude that people traveling with culinary motivation are more likely to consume local food tasted on holidays, once at home. Therefore, gastronomy appears to be an element capable of positively impacting rural economies, stimulating local producers and farmers, on the one hand, creating new forms of cooperation with tourism and, on the other, diversifying tourism destinations, increasing their competitiveness at national and international levels. Data confirm the relationship between culinary motivation to travel, and the intention to consume local products from the destination visited at the place of residence.

This result represents an original contribution to the knowledge and improvement of the potential benefits, which can be achieved by linking traditional agriculture and tourism, using traditional gastronomy as an enhancer element.

Finally, a certain correlation has been confirmed between the culinary motivation to travel and the high-income levels of tourists (Spearman correlation = 0.098;  $p$ -value = 0.027). This result answers the third research question. Culinary tourists represent an attractive consumer segment for both the tourism and the agro-food industry due to their high-income level and the cash-flow they can generate for both sectors at the destination while on holidays, and later on, from their place of origin. This result is consistent with previous studies that reached similar conclusions and that have been a major reference for this research (Fox 2007; Sánchez-Cañizares and López-Guzmán 2011).

## 5. Conclusions

The relationship between agriculture and tourism has been studied from multiple perspectives due to the important positive effects that can come from their effective cooperation. Tourism can be a suitable complementary activity for small-scale agricultural businesses; nevertheless, links between the two sectors are not easy to reach (McElwee 2006; Telfer and Wall 1996).

At present, cooperation between agriculture and tourism is planned with two perspectives: business diversification (i.e., agritourism) and food sourcing (local producers and farmers are food suppliers for hotels and restaurants). In both cases, impediments have to be faced, which make it difficult for cooperation to achieve significant profitability.

The recent interest in traditional gastronomy and quality food offers new opportunities for the development of rural economies and the tourism sector. The rise of culinary tourism is an indicator of a new trend that encourages consumers to care about the quality of food. The demand for certified, organic, and traditional food is growing, as well as their availability in agro-food markets. Biénabe et al. (2011) define this trend as “the quality turn”, stressing the importance placed on health.

Traditional products are achieving a fundamental role due to their potential for tourism and small-scale agriculture. From the tourism perspective, previous studies show that gastronomy is an influential factor in the destination selection process and this absorbs a high percentage of the tourists' total expenditure (Fox 2007; López-Guzmán and Sánchez-Cañizares 2012; Sánchez-Cañizares and López-Guzmán 2011). From the agriculture perspective, gastronomic tourists can be seen as new potential consumers who buy local products during their holidays. Moreover, after having tasted certain products while on holidays, gastronomic tourism can turn into regular customers who start to demand specific products in their place of origin.

This means that culinary tourism is an enhancing element in the cooperation between tourism and agriculture. Traditional, high-quality food can help enterprises from both sectors to increase their profitability, without the need for professionals from either field to acquire new skills or diversify their original business.

The most interesting result of the research has to be seen in the confirmation of the relationship that links the gastronomic motivation to travel and the consumption of traditional products from the destination visited from the place of origin. Empirical data analysis proves a significant difference in the means of the two groups defined in the sample (tourists traveling with or without a gastronomic motivation) and in relation to the consumption habits of traditional products in their households.

It can be concluded that gastronomic motivation and the urge to experience new products and flavors while on holidays express a new trend among consumers, which can be strategically exploited. These results are in line with the outcomes achieved by Dinamiza Consulting (2017), having carried out research in Spain, finding that the majority of the surveyed tourists (76.25%) declared to have traveled to a certain destination with a gastronomic motivation within the last two years, so they can be considered culinary tourists. The results of this work are consistent with this rate, so it can be assumed to be reliable.

The recent interest in high-quality traditional food provides an opportunity for profitable cooperation between tourism and agriculture, enhanced by gastronomy. Results and conclusions of the present research have meaningful implications for the management and marketing of tourism destinations and for the consolidation of rural economies based on traditional agricultural activities

over the long-term. Tourism and agriculture managers should improve touristic programs that allow culinary travelers to have a deep experience of traditional products. Accordingly, local restaurants are highly recommended to design their menus around the local and traditional products of their areas and to clearly communicate it to their customers. At the same time, the results suggest the construction of an easy purchase and delivery channel (i.e., e-commerce) for local products to turn sporadic consumption, which occurs during the holiday time, into regular consumption from the tourists' places of origin. This will provide the tourism sector with attractive offerings for those who travel with a determined gastronomic motivation and the small-scale agriculture producers with a low-cost chance to geographically expand their market.

Limitations to this research are in the geographical area selected, as only one destination was used in the fieldwork. It would have been desirable to involve a wider geographical area and several destinations. In addition, the sampling strategy adopted limits the generalizability of results.

Future works can focus on looking into the concrete effects that a gastronomic experience can promote buying intentions with regards to local products from the place of residence. Similarly, it would be useful to quantify the real economic impact of the on-trip and post-trip purchases of local food on local food producers. Moreover, it would be helpful to analyze in detail what are the most commonly-used purchasing channels for traditional food, the most consumed products, and why. Thus, new knowledge would be generated that can help the small-scale producers to enter markets that would be inaccessible without the mediation of the culinary tourism experience.

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