TERRITORY, TOURISM AND LOCAL PRODUCTS. THE EXTRA VIRGIN OIL'S ENHANCEMENT AND PROMOTION: A BENCHMARKING ITALY-SPAIN

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Abstract

Purpose – This paper intends to highlight how local tourism development is strongly oriented towards policy development based on the combination typical product-territory, in particular extra virgin olive oil, which assigns value to identity, social capital and indigenous cultural heritage.

Design – The work supports the idea that the development strategies of typical products should be considered as a potential local development tool. Besides the enhancing the knowledge of product itself and of its ties with local history and traditions, this could also help promoting a quality tourism in the awareness that local products contribute to the implementation of a multiplicity of local initiatives (such as tourist paths, markets, educational initiatives, community events) able to encourage and support new social relations.

Metodology – At a methodological level, the paper developed a theoretical contextualization of the subject of study in the gastronomic tourism and compared, using the technique of benchmarking, the experiences of extra virgin olive oil enhancement and promotion in Italy and Spain. These two countries were selected for this study since they are the main producers in the world of olive oil with certified quality.

Approach – The interpretative approach has characterized the development of this study; theoretical elaboration and empirical research in fact are processed in parallel.

Finding – The research work has demonstrated that the enhancement of extra virgin olive oil is a great potential for the development of new tourism practices such as gastronomic tourism.

Originality of research – The work represents a first effort to compare the development and promotion strategies of extra virgin olive oil in Italy and Spain and to examine the possible links with local tourism development.

Keywords Typical product, extra virgin olive oil, local and tourism development, alternative tourism, Italy, Spain

1. INTRODUCTION

The collective nature of the typical product and its ability to estimate properly the identity, the qualities and the culture of a territory, strengthen the ways of enhancement which are set out locally (Bèrard et al., 2005). Estimating the typical products means more than just commercializing in order to run rural development which is displayed in an endogenous, integrated and sustainable way (Slee, 1993). The typical products are associated to numerous eco-social benefits which feature:

- the increase of the earnings in the agricultural firms located in the rural areas which, through the proper synergies, can be multiplied with the setting of local economical networks;
- the establishment of a qualified occupation;
- the regeneration, through estimation and conservation, of the traditional activities;
- the development of a gastronomic tourism which can help improving the economical sustainability of the referring territories.

In such context the promotion of typical products and the development of a gastronomic tourism can offer opportunities to get over the current economical crisis. Particularly in the less facilitated and marginal rural areas, which have not quite felt the modernisation process, can be established a conservative rural developing model aimed to preserve the local elements upon which it bases (Sortino and Chang, 2008), and aimed to display the capabilities gained locally to convert the local resources into highquality food product. This is a development locally executed which respects and looks after the local values. Within this new paradigm, typical products become a resource which helps minor areas growing since they manage to integrate and improve all the territorial resources (Brunori, Rossi, 2000; Mardersen et al., 2000), paying attention as well to the post-modern tourist's consumption habits. The enhancement of the many territorial resources can vary according to the actors involved and to the strategies they decide to adopt. Therefore, typical products represent a potential resource for the local community and, around them, associative tendencies are built along with collective development projects. Typicalness, in fact, does not only depend on the productive process that takes to the get product done, but as well on the relations between the actors of the territorial system who give the product a collective dimension. The product's collective nature and its capability of enhancing the territory's identity, quality and culture is leading to the growth of new social relation networks which help orienting local development's choices towards issues dealing with development's sustainability, communities' living conditions, the improvement of territorial identity (Murphy, Murphy, 2004; Beeton, 2006).

This developing process brings forth new institutional networks which generate networks of social and local interests around the "typical products" issue, modifying territorial dynamics, referring and confrontation centres. In this context, new actors, new functions and new ways of relation are brought forth and new social subjects underline the efforts that the typical products can make for the local development.

In this work there will be a reminder to the theoretical approach of territorial quality and integrated territorial strategy (Pacciani, 2002; Marescotti, 2003). Under this perspective, it is the identity of the territory and the complex of all the local resources to generate quality, instead of the output of a single production. The typical product stands for the "Leitmotiv" which connects all the offers of the territory, including the touristic ones, within a single integrated territorial system. Without any relation with its own territory, a typical product gains specificity and recognisability on the market (Belletti, 2002). The variegated panorama made up by the typical product becomes an attraction as well for the tourists since it represents a territorial context in which customs still play a major role.

Considering the enhancement of typical products and the development of gastronomic tourism as the theoretical background to refer to, in this study we pay attention to extra virgin olive oil and we deem it as food product which has both a very own and touristic identity. Scientific literature committed to the touristic development topic is starting to assign an important role to olive oil as potential attraction for a category of curious tourists willing to become familiar with the culture and the identity of a territory through its food products.

Nevertheless, there are still a few study examples oriented towards the evaluation of olive oil under a touristic perspective. Conscious of the need to devote greater attention to the olive culture, especially from the scientific world as professional and practical, we set as an objective of this paper the study and understanding of the phenomenon of olive oil tourism. At a methodological level, we have developed a theoretical contextualization of the subject of study in the gastronomic tourism and we compared, using the technique of benchmarking, the experiences of oil evaluation in Italy and Spain. These two countries were selected for this study since they are the main producers in the world of olive oil quality certified (see Table 1).

2. GASTRONOMIC TOURISM: POSSIBLE STRATEGY FOR THE EVALUATION OF FOOD PRODUCTS

Gastronomy in recent years has attained a central role in journey plans. Espeitx (2004) refers to the process of assigning a "wealth tax" to foods and local culinary specialties in order to consider them true tourist attractions itself, capable of moving certain travellers that international literature calls "foodies" (Fox, 2007). This term identifies all those tourists sensitive to the local culinary heritage, who live food as a complex and cultural experience, rather than reducing it only to a useful resource to satisfy basic needs for nutrition. Kivela and Crotts (2006) claim that food can play an important role in determining the quality of the tourist experience who lives the traveller. The food, for its strong territorial implications, lends itself as a point of union between the authenticity of a territory and tourists, who are characterized by a growing desire of genuine and participatory proposals, closely related to the specificities of the territory visited (Nocifora et al., 2011). The tasting of the food and the knowledge of the production processes of the typical local food begin to be considered tourism practices that allow the traveller to get in touch with a complex heritage of identity, lifestyles and traditions (Barrera, 2006). This aspect is particularly relevant if we consider that the modern tourist industry is devoting increasing attention to the experiential dimension and intangible heritage of the journey, so that we experience a transformation of tourism, a market of services, passes to be a market emotions and feelings. In this context, the search for tourist activities that enhance the sensory component requires a reorganization of the traditional (Nocifora et al., 2011). Gastronomy and local food specialties, as well as to identify themselves as culturally rich products, establish themselves as important tools of communication and brand image of an area (Hjalager, 2002; Folgado et al., 2011).

Roden (2003) states that the power supply is a fundamental part of the culture. Represents a nexus of union with the past and a legacy to pass on to future generations and to other populations, forms part of the identity of a place and reflects the lives of people.

Within a travel, gastronomy identifies you as an integral part of the tourist experience because it implies the possibility to enjoy food and meals other than those of our daily lives (Quan and Wang, 2004).

The combination of the food industry and tourism is defined as an opportunity, not only for differentiation of destinations, but also for the use and conservation of local production and all induced benefits that they generate. The gastronomic itineraries assert themselves properly for the need to structure in a tangible way the essence of a new tourism experience centred on culinary heritage. In this way, the gastronomy, as well as being a pleasant sensory activity, becomes a pull factor and a marketing tool for tourism destinations (Folgado et al. 2011; Aybar, 2004). Folgado (et al., 2011) emphasizes the concept of gastronomic itinerary that identifies a path that allows the knowledge of a particular native culinary specialty in a structured and organized way. Normally the food product gives its name to the route and its main purpose is to strengthen the local gastronomy, culinary and publicize the potential to offer a range of associated services. Thus, the route or the gastronomic tour facilitates boosting economic and social destiny of a leveraging of resources and industry closely tied to the land and its history.

3. EXPERIENCES OF ENHANCEMENT EXTRA VIRGIN OIL IN SPAIN AND ITALY

Italy and Spain are two countries where, for historical reasons, natural and cultural tourism is a focal sector in their economies. In a context of global crisis, both countries have an incentive to wine-related tourism, boasting the most popular gastronomic cultures and internationally renowned (TripAdvisor, 2012). Geographically, the major oil producers in the world are concentrated in this region of the world and specifically in the areas of Spain, Italy, Cyprus, Portugal, Slovenia, Malta and Greece (EUROSTAT, 2012). Among these, Spain and Italy held the record in quantitative and qualitative terms. The quality of the oil is now certified under the brands of Protected Designation of Origin (PDO) which meet the parameters and value indices established at the European level. Italy and Spain emerge as the countries with the higher number of PDO oil (see Table 1).

Table 1: D.O.P. olive oil in the main producer countries of the eu

Producer country	Number of acknowledged certifications
ITALY	42
SPAIN	24
GREECE	16
PORTUGAL	6
SLOVENY	1
MALTA	0

Source: personal elaboration of data on http://ec.europa.eu/ (on line the 24/01/2013)

At a tourist level we must look at olive oil culture with a special attention. First, because the tourist is proving more and more interest about the knowledge of the local culinary heritage and typical food products, and secondly, because considering the data provided by the European Commission, the olive oil is an element that differentiates strongly the Italian and Spanish gastronomy worldwide. It is therefore a product with a strong strategic value, currently little used. It is necessary to leverage this product to enable new tourist dynamics based on the quality of local and typical food.

3.1. The Spanish case.

The tourist's practices related to the culture of oil have developed in a consequential way than wine tourism and gastronomy in general, establishing itself as an opportunity for innovation of the Spanish tourist (Molina et al., 2011).

The Ministry of Industry, Tourism and Trade of the Spanish Government, together with the company Segittur, has carried out a research with the aim of understanding the evolution and current status of food tourism in Spain (Segittur, 2010). The results of the study prove the growing interest of tourists to food products and demonstrate that the food is often identified as the main motivation of travel and choice of the destination. ACEVIN (2012) has recently published data on the wine tourism in Spain, according to which the wine tourism is moving about 1.5 million people.

Compared to 2011, there was an increase of 6.06% of the visits to wineries and wine tourism in Spain. It is to consider the growth that the sector is experiencing in the current international economic situation.

Both the data by Segittur as those by ACEVIN, suggest the presence of an attractive target from the point of view of tourism, characterized by consumers which differ in having particular needs and desires. It is a market large enough to justify specific efforts, directed to managing and promoting products around the theme of quality food. A theoretical level, the literature frames the Spanish tourism oil, as a subcategory of two types of tourism more established. Some authors associate Oiltourism with rural tourism, for sharing the same geographical and territorial space. Rural areas represent the contexts in which typical food products are traditionally produced. In this way, gastronomic tourism is considered a complementary activity in the rural tourism practices (Millan, Agudo, 2010). López-Sánchez and Guzmán (2008), by contrast, see the culinary tourism as a tourist category itself, and oil tourism, as a specific expression of the same. Campón (et al., 2011) says that Oiltourism identifies a new wave of tourist motivations and tastes that have to be included within the common matrix and wider gastronomic tourism. In the end, some authors (Richards, 2002; Mak et al., 2012; Ritzer, 1995) define food as a resource with a strong cultural meaning, as expression of identity, history and socio-economic situation of a region. Tourism experiences related to oil must be, therefore, included in the typology of cultural tourism.

The positive effects experienced by a long experience of union between the wine and tourism, have suggested the opportunity to apply tourism development models similar to those areas with oil vocation and oil tradition. The combination of oil-tourism is proposed as a complementary element to the development of the agricultural

economies of rural areas dedicated to the cultivation of olive trees (Millán et al., 2010). Concretely, the tourist development of this resource is available in a series of actions of the program Interreg III C (Oleoadapt, Oleoyouthstart, Oleointegra, Oleointerpresise, Oleolife, oleoturismo) pursuing the objective of facilitating the tourist marketing of oil lands (Millán, Agudo, 2010). The spread of the culture of the olive, has given rise to a number of initiatives in the public and private sectors at national and supranational level which have pursued the objective of exploit olive oil, not only in a food perspective, but also as a product depositary of a complex culture, traditions, identity and lifestyle (Loumou, Giourga, 2003) and as such, a powerful tourist attraction (Molina et al., 2011; Ruiz et al., 2012). We make particular reference to the AEMO (Asociación Española de Municipios del Olivo), nationally, and REMO (The European Network of Municipalities oil) acting at European level. Albeit on different territorial bases of both the action promotes the consolidation of sensitivity to oil culture.

According to data from Eurostat (2012), the cultivation of olives in Spain is distributed among 413,000 farms, each with an average size of 5.3 hectares of land. The larger companies and volume of production are located in the region of Andalusia where he focuses the majority of the 27 certified products (PDO and PGI) of the national territory.

The enhancement of the local product, must always take as a starting point territory. If we focus our study on the Andalusia region, we can see that companies and major players involved in the production of this product are concentrated in a relatively small geographical space.

The proximity of the agents involved and the location of production in an area traditionally rich in tourism resources facilitates the activation of redevelopment plans and projects to market, a local identity and culture specific to the oil. Despite the recent development of tourism products around the oil culture in Andalusia (Flavian and Fandos, 2011), we note the lack of attention given to the promotion and marketing of this valuable local resource by government. We analysed the Webs of tourism, both regional, as the ones of the main Andalusian provinces where oil with PDO in produced in order to know the degree of importance that the local tourist authorities are reserving and recognising to this product (see Table 2).

Table 2: Promotional initiatives of olive oil tourism in Andalusia

Region/Area	Web	Proposte e offerte di olioturismo	
Andalusia	www.andalucia.org	- Information relative to the oil's DOP	
(Region)			
Cádiz	www.cadizturismo.com	No information related to the oil	
Córdoba	www.cordobaturismo.es	3 Oil Museums:	
		- Museum of Aceite de Mantilla	
		- Museum of Aceite Mulino Viejo de	
		Cabra	
		- Museo del olivar y del Aceite de Baena	
Granada	www.turgranada.es	 Visit to the facilities of two producers. 	
		Primarily aimed at schools and	
		educational institutions.	
Jaén	www.promojaen.es	- 1 Oil Route	
		- 25 Mills visited	
		- Olive Festival (December 8)	
		- Museum of active oil and sustainability	
		- Culture Museum of Olive Oil	
		- 9 specialty shops that specialize in	
		products related to the olive oil.	
Malaga	www.visitacostadelsol.com	No relevant information	
Seville	www.turismosevilla.org	- 1 Oil itinerary	

Source: Personal elaboration from Web regional data of tourism of Andalusia www.andalucia.org and local Web of Cádiz: www.cadizturismo.com, Cordoba: www.cordobaturismo.es, Granada: www.turgranada.es, Jaén: www.promojaen.es, Malaga: www.visitacostadelsol.com, Seville: www.turismosevilla.org. On line 30/01/2013.

The results presented graphically in the table above show that the supply of tourism products capable of estimate and commercialize olive oil as a factor of differentiation of the tourist's offer, which today is still very limited, furthermore unstructured and little publicized. The local government of one of the most important in the world in terms of quality and quantity of olive oil have not yet taken the right route and the best initiatives for the development of tourism and economic development of oil lands. In this regard, it would be appropriate to facilitate the cooperation and the pooling of initiatives olive oil tourism the region, although there and begin to develop through private initiatives (Flavian, Fandos, 2011), they need a greater impetus and support from the government public for their proper development. In this way the oil culture can express its value for tourism and make cross those benefits that are already experiencing many destinations with the development of enology or the typical gastronomy in general.

3.2. The Italian case.

In Italy, an important opportunity to promote oil and tourism practices connected, is given either by the establishment of network systems companies, which operate in specific local contexts with the support of local public actors, but also by the creation of partnerships between actors public support and trigger actions to support the local development. Several are in fact those who work in various capacities in the olive oil sector: government agencies, trade associations (olive growers, oil-millers, etc...), research institutes, (National Research Council, Institute for experimental olive growing, Universities), the groups of tasters, the National Association of olive oil city, the road of olive oil. Important is their role in the support, promotion, training and preparation of development projects. There are more than 360 (Table 3) the Italian public bodies committed to the preservation of extra virgin olive oil. Increase in fact, the number of Italian regions participating in the National Association of Oil city, boasting a production of extra virgin olive oil or quality extra virgin olive oil PDO and PGI, which is becoming a real engine for economic and tourist areas with a strong olive oil. The Association supports and enhances the production and territories that display the City oil and investing in the development and preservation of local mills, construction of tourist routes dedicated to the discovery of oil.

Table 3: Number of public bodies that adhere to the National City oil in the Italian regions

Abruzzo	16
Basilicata	14
Calabria	15
Campania	31
Emilia Romagna	1
Friuli Venezia Giulia	7
Lazio	19
Liguria	37
Lombardia	3
Marche	17
Molise	30
Puglia	30
Sardegna	28
Sicilia	16
Toscana	46
Trentino	2
Umbria	24
Veneto	6

Source: personal elaboration from the national association of olive oil city

The national association of olive oil city also gave rise to a series of initiatives to enhance not only important in terms of food, but also as an expression of traditions, identities and lifestyles associated with the product oil. As such, the oil can be a powerful tourist attraction. Each year the event is organized GIROLIO that, in 2012, involved 18 regions in a real journey to the places of local products. The '2012 edition was dedicated to the theme of olive oil landscape and the olive oil's nomination to Intangible Heritage of Humanity UNESCO, sponsored by Re.Co.Med - Network Oil City of the Mediterranean, to which both Italy and Spain join.

Further experiences in which the link olive oil and tourism becomes an important element for the development of the agricultural economies of rural areas are characterized by the cultivation of olive trees, are the oil roads. In Italy the positive experience of the wine roads has also been extended for the construction of roads aimed at the enhancement of other quality products, in particular oil. The presence of a space delimited and identifiable is essential to the creation of a path that enhances a particular typical product, since it defines its producers for an identity that enhances its unique characteristics (Bruwer, 2003). The reconstruction of the links between the territory and its productions represents a significant opportunity for local promotion. In particular, the construction of a network of companies that operate in a specific local context, with the support of local public actors, leads to a shared vision of local development (Hall et al., 1997), and to create effective relationships based on identity and belonging. Interesting and unique in the Italian National Road is the regional oil DOP Umbria, the following road oil, which was established by the extension of the provisions of Law no. 38 of 22.12.1999 "Regulations on the Wine Roads in Umbria." The olive oil road is a voluntary non-profit public-private partnership, whose members are 22 municipalities, Chambers of Commerce, the provinces of Perugia and Terni and the Mountain Community of Martani, and Subasio Serano, representing the public component. Data, updated in July 2012, show that the private party is represented by 23 farms, 24 mills and 27 structures, referred to as the dwellings DOP Umbria. The road of olive oil combines a set of values, and items not only related to the economic and environmental items, but also social and cultural. It is a bond that connects all the tourist offers in network placed in a broader context, where the environment, the landscape, the urban structure of countries and towns provide a picturesque setting within which the oil. Throughout the Road oil has become a unique system of values that relates different social subjects, giving a sense common to the local culture and natural landscapes. Is this context that conveys a distinctive character to the olive oil road and allows, in particular, to tourists, to recognize and promoting diversity of the landscape during their trip (Hall et al., 2000).

4. CONCLUSIONS, LIMITS AND FUTURE WORKS

The development and promotion of typical products, in this case oil, becomes a tourist and territorial development strategy, especially in those areas which are most vulnerable, as the rural ones. In these places the main attraction is the presence of an intangible asset that needs to be enhanced through sustainable and qualitative development patterns. The enhancement of the local product and in particular the link between oil and tourism seems to be a natural process so an instrument capable of

causing great benefits in those areas not suited to a traditional tourism. It can generate new opportunities for local development, avoiding repeating the numerous attempts to define new tourist practices solely on the basis of the supply characteristics. The positive effects that are experienced in the now-established wine tourism experiences are being extended also to the enhancement of the oil. Olive cultivation is an integral part of the local culture and rural heritage is an important source of employment and may be a new area of development, including through tourism. The work, which is a first investigation characterized by a qualitative approach, has highlighted some interesting experiences to enhance and promote oil both in Spain and in Italy. In both nations stars to arise a new awareness of how the oil, as a strongly identity element of national culture, can be associated with many socio-economic benefits, including, primarily, the development of a culinary tourism that contributes to the development of many initiatives, such as tourist, educational ones and events, that encourage and support not only new social relations, but also the creation of new local economic networks whose activity can also contribute to the increase of income of agricultural enterprises in rural areas. Limitations of this work have to be recognised in its mainly theoretical character. In the future it should be useful to carry on quantitative studies both on the supply and demand side in the two countries in order to get a proper idea of how this new tourism typology could be better developed and have statistical data which could lead to new comparative conclusions and reflections.

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