

STRINGS - Selling The Rural IN (urban) Gourmet Stores – establishing new liaisons between town and country through the sale and consumption of rural products (PTDC/GES-OUT/29281/2017/ POCI-01-0145-FEDER-029281)

STRINGS

Consuming Portugal through food: representations and determinants of choice from Portuguese and foreigner consumers

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Background

- Rural provenance food has been gauging interest among consumers increasingly aware and knowledgeable about what they eat (Caputo et al., 2018)
- Consumers preference for rural provenance food shares current determinants of food choice, namely concerns for health, wellbeing and environment, hedonic and sensorial appeals and valorisation of provenance
- These factors provide cues on how these products are represented according to consumers' beliefs, values and identities (e.g. the increasingly acknowledged phenomenon of consumers ethnocentrism and/or nationalism)



Background

- The growth of urban specialty stores have accompanied this interest, and, besides providing a venue to sell them, they also model how rural provenance products are portrayed and communicated (Silva et al., 2021)
- **One of the topics underexplored in this context is how these products reach, are represented and chosen by national and foreign consumers (tourists and residents)**

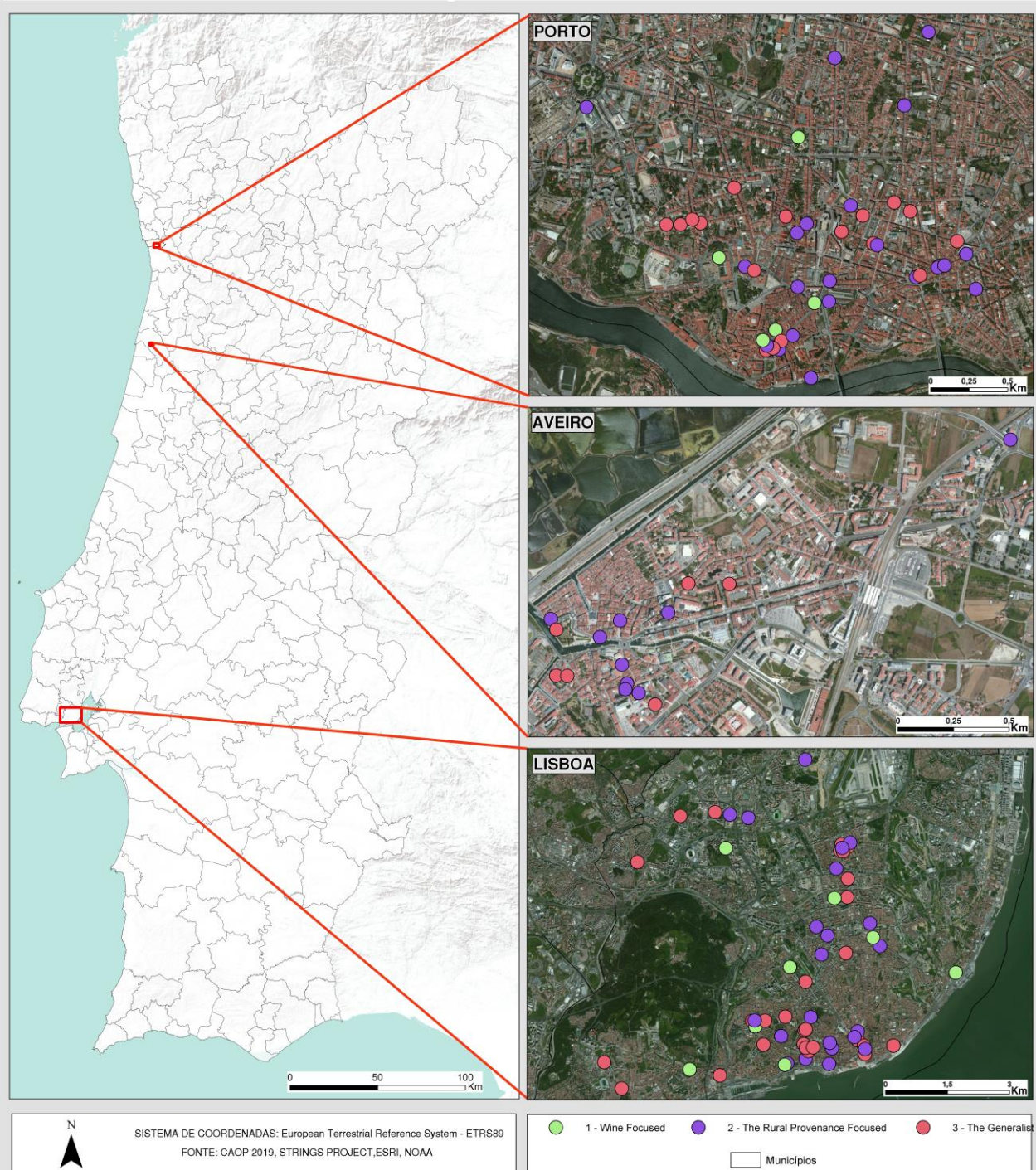
Aims

This paper contributes to the topic, by exploring:

- how portuguese and foreign consumers represent rural provenance food products and rural territories of origin
- what criteria do portuguese and foreigner consumers privilegie to choose these products

➤ A survey conducted between June 2020 and June 2021 targeting the customers of 24 specialty food shops located in three Portuguese cities (N=1553) – Aveiro, Lisbon and Porto.

➤ These shops were randomly selected based on a hierarchical cluster analysis of a universe of 119 shops located the 3 cities.





Methods

- Three clusters of shops:
 - **The Wine Focused** (selling wine and other beverages);
 - **The Rural Provenance Focused** (selling rural provenance foods) and
 - **The Generalist** (including diverse products from various provenances) (Silva et al., 2021)
- This paper focuses on the **national (n= 1175)** and **foreign customers (N=373)** of those shops. In the data collection and analysis, **only Portuguese food products were considered.**



- The questionnaire was prepared both in Portuguese and in English and is divided in two parts:
 - 1. Consumption of traditional rural national-based products (e.g. representations of rural contexts and rural food products, products acquired, frequency, region of origin, reasons to acquire them)
 - 2. Consumers sociodemographic profile.
- The groups were compared using Chi square test and t-test regarding their representations of rural territories of origin, provenance food products, products purchased and criteria of choice of rural provenance food.



Representations of rural contexts

Categories	Portuguese Foreigners	
Gaze, Tranquility and Well-Being	423	148
Environment and Natural Elements	343	118
Farming	215	57
Roots and Nostalgia	195	53
Authentic, Traditional and Unique	189	43
Abandonment, Isolation and ageing	184	72
Places, Villages and Ways of Life	162	45
Food Products and Characteristics	138	45
Undeveloped and problematic	63	21
Growth and Diversity	43	8

Chi-square test shows only differences in the representation of authentic, traditional and unique- The representation of rural contexts as more authentic and traditional is more likely to be shared by Portuguese

Representations of Rural Food Products

Representation of rural contexts as more authentic and traditional by Portuguese **is also reflected in the most common representation of rural products as related to farmers and production processes.**

Meat and animal-based products- more likely to be found in the group of foreigner

Farmers and farming- more associated to Portuguese

The verbatim evocations more frequent are similar, suggesting that it is indeed an important part of the representation of rural provenance food products: **cheese, quality, wine and taste.**

Categories of Evocations of Rural Provenance Food (%)

	Portuguese	Foreigner
Quality	761	241
Sensorial/organoletic features of products	232	82
Distinction and Authenticity	141	37
Nature/Environment/Sustainability	133	40
Family/Nostalgia	58	17
Chemically free/ UnHealthy	53	18
Freshness	43	16
Selection/Monotony	41	11
Regional, local, from specific places	35	12
Trustworthy	25	8
Products	689	263
Meat and animal-based products	203	94
Cheese and other milk derivatives	192	63
Vegetables, Cereals and Fruits	132	46
Wine	106	40
Honey, Jams and Sweets	56	20
Type of production	278	70
Hand-made, Traditional, Experience and Know-how	136	45
Farmers and Farming	96	16
Organic	46	9
Positive attributes	245	84
General quality	245	84
Gastronomy and Cuisine	24	6
Origin	20	3
National character	20	3
Price	11	1

Products purchased

Products purchased	Portuguese	Foreigner	Total
Wine	229	64	293
Cheese	134	51	185
Olive oil	42	13	55
Alheira	35	15	50
Vegetables	35	14	49
Bread	34	14	27
Dried fruits	31	11	42
Honey	15	12	27
Sausages	24	2	26
Eggs	19	6	25
Liquor	17	7	24

Wine is the most acquired product by both Portuguese and foreigners, followed by Cheese

Chi-square tests indicate significant differences between Portuguese and Foreigners in the acquisition of Cured Meat; Meat; Honey, jams and preserves and Craft

Type of products	Higher frequency of purchase (significant differences)
Cured Meat and other	Portuguese
Meat	Portuguese
Honey, jams and preserves	Foreigners
Craft	Foreigners



Reasons to choose Rural Provenance Food

Reasons	Nationality	Mean	Std. Deviation
If they taste better	Portuguese	<u>4,39</u>	0,87
	Foreigner	<u>4,21</u>	0,89
That they are produced in Portugal	Portuguese	4,30	0,86
	Foreigner	4,09	0,93
Having a fair price	Portuguese	4,22	0,94
	Foreigner	4,09	0,89
If they are fresh produce	Portuguese	4,21	0,97
	Foreigner	4,10	0,94
To support Portuguese agriculture and rural areas	Portuguese	4,14	1,00
	Foreigner	4,02	0,98
That they are local	Portuguese	4,13	0,94
	Foreigner	4,08	0,91
To trust in the store and in its specialized customer service	Portuguese	4,08	0,98
	Foreigner	3,85	1,02
If they look good	Portuguese	4,08	0,95
	Foreigner	4,10	0,94
To be produced in Portuguese rural areas	Portuguese	4,02	1,04
	Foreigner	3,80	1,06
If their production carries a low environmental impact	Portuguese	3,96	1,09
	Foreigner	3,92	1,06

The main reasons to acquire rural provenance features are:

- 1) **sensorial/organoleptic features** ('their better taste' is the most valued criteria; 'if the are fresh produce'; 'if they look good)- t-test indicate these are equally valued by Portuguese and Foreigners

- 2) **National, local provenance and impact** ('To support Portuguese agriculture and rural areas; 'That they are local'), more valued by Portuguese in line with consumers' ethnocentrism and/or nationalism phenomenon

- 1) **Convenience and reach factors** ('Fair price', 'To trust in the the store), more valued by Portuguese

Regions

Regions	Portuguese	Foreigner
Trás-os-Montes	553	175
Beira Interior	341	126
Alentejo	240	46
Entre Douro e Minho	194	73
Beira Litoral	119	46
Açores	116	25
Ribatejo e Oeste	61	25
Algarve	8	1

Trás-os-Montes, Beira Interior, Alentejo and Entre Douro e Minho are the most frequent regions of the products purchased

Chi-square tests show no significant differences between Portuguese and Foreign consumers regarding the food products acquired and their regions of origin

Concluding remarks

- The present study informs about differences on the image and choice of rural provenance products that may provide a benchmark to guide attuned communication and marketing of these foodstuffs.

The sensorial/organoleptic features (as taste, freshness and healthier character) are valued by both Portuguese and foreigners

- National and local provenance products and the positive socio-economic impact of these productions in rural areas and Portuguese agriculture are specially valued by Portuguese consumers, in line with the growing pattern of consumers' ethnocentrism and/or nationalism. This preference, fuelled by a familiarity with the products and convenience aspects, is of special importance to connect with the entrepreneurship of urban specialty stores.
- The specialty food shops have a paramount role in fostering the interest of Portuguese and Foreign consumers for Portuguese rural provenance products. Acting as showcases with direct connection with rural territories and bringing the rural to the cities, they enable consuming Portugal through food, not only the products but also the territories of origin



Limitations and research avenues

- Much fewer participants in the group of foreign consumers
- Data collection in only three cities
- The empirical evidence and analysis may also apply to other Southern European Countries (e.g. Italy, Spain, Greece) that share similarities in terms of diet, agriculture and rural areas transformations and consumption practices



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Thank You!
Muito Obrigada!

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