

# THE INTER-COMMUNITY COMPETITION AS A FACTOR FOR SUSTAINABILITY AND DIFFERENTIATION OF TOURISM PRODUCT The case of National Park of Peneda Gerês

**António Sérgio Araújo de Almeida**  
Polytechnic Institute of Leiria, Portugal

**ABSTRACT:** The inter-community competition through its local traditions may emerge as a decisive factor to pave the way for the forthcoming of sustainable touristic opportunities, involving communities and contributing decisively to its economic development. The Assumption of the Identity Power (Castells, 1999) by the local communities emerges as a key factor to strengthen their identity. The isolation of certain communities, usually regarded as negative, strongly favours their involvement around their values, encouraging and promoting the emergence of rivalries and consequent inter-community competitions. **Keywords:** folk traditions, community involvement, competition, assumptive identity, differentiation of tourist opportunities.

**RESUMEN:** La competición entre las comunidades, a través de sus tradiciones locales, puede surgir como un factor decisivo para allanar el camino para la venida de oportunidades turísticas sostenibles, involucrando las comunidades y contribuyendo decisivamente a su desarrollo económico. La Asunción del Poder de la Identidad (Castells, 1999) por las comunidades locales emerge como un factor clave para fortalecer su identidad. El aislamiento de ciertas comunidades, generalmente considerado negativo, favorece fuertemente su comunión en torno de sus valores, fomentando y promoviendo el surgimiento de rivalidades y consecuentemente competitividad intercomunitarias. **Palabras clave:** tradiciones populares, participación comunitaria, competencia, identidad, diferenciación de las oportunidades turísticas.

## INTRODUCTION

In a world deeply marked by the globalization process, local communities are facing an enormous/serious challenge of sustainability that can be positively softened by the concept of *Assumption Identity* (Almeida, 2007), which is a process of sharing local values, used in order to get an identification and differentiation of autochthonous com-

---

António Sérgio Araújo de Almeida is associate professor at Polytechnic Institute of Leiria (IPL), Portugal, and member of GITUR – Tourism Research Unit of the IPL. He coordinates the course in Tourism and the master's degree in Management and Sustainability in Tourism at the School of Tourism and Maritime Technology.

munities. This means to take hold of its environmental and cultural legacy in a sustainable way.

In this case study, we saw sustainability practices for the economic, social, ecological and cultural aspects of tourism. The studied event has become, after local involvement, a tourism attraction evaluated by the local authorities as more than five million Euros worth, which is very significant for a population of 1,800 inhabitants. The tourism product is based on the potential of local flora and fauna which is assumed as cultural identity by local population.

Beyond a logic associated with mass or on the other hand in an attempted assertion of identity, the processes inherent to globalization generate significant impacts in various political, economic, social and cultural activities. Globalization massifies, but it also promotes identities.

Tourism is deeply marked by the processes of globalization, thus assuming two different realities, including mass tourism and a new concept of tourism, associated with sustainability, the alternative tourism, ecotourism or the so called tourism of prestige (Correia & Moital, 2009).

Without concealing the economic and social impacts of mass tourism, in this paper, we examine the assumption of identity of tourism systems as the foundation for building a corporate image reaching out to new paradigms of sustainable tourism pursued by the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO).

It is, therefore, important to discuss which mechanisms may be triggered in tourism systems in order to give rise to new collective attitudes for the Identity Assumption, which may somehow result in sustainable tourism and differentiated offerings, thus reflecting the diversity concentrated of Portuguese territory. Globalization is largely fed on the differences and specificities of the icons.

The new cultural intermediaries (Fortuna, 1997) are a unique opportunity for local and regional specificities. To assume a concentrated diversity in Portugal implies the recognition of the existence of different identities that should not only be promoted under logic of a sustainable tourism system in an economic, social, cultural and ecological range (UNWTO), but also in the field of external promotion, most associated with the flows of transnationalism and Globalization.

The involvement of autochthonous communities around their value systems is an essential condition for this Identity Assumption because they embody the identity in question (Almeida, 2007). This case study helped us to realize that tourism systems face a daunting challenge: to diagnose tools that involve their communities around their legacy and cultural environmental.

The adoption of Gastronomy as tourism attraction changed the image of Montalegre. It is understood that this way tourism can be a powerful agent of economic and social changes, stimulating em-

ployment, increasing investments and changing the way of using land (Martins, 2002).

The involvement and success of the event depends crucially on the ability to plan and manage the connections of the different actors involved. The actors are: the government and the local community, who organized the event and the local community, private sector and local community, the public and the organization of the event, the event's promoter and the private sector, private sector and clients' visitors, the public authorities and customers and visitors, the organization of the event and visitors and customers (Tomazzoni, 2001).

### *Community involvement – the case of Montalegre*

It is therefore opportune to consider tools that provide this involvement in a natural and spontaneous way, in order not to lose sight of the objective authenticity, the authenticity of the original objects and practices. This involvement will be more feasible from the moment when communities feel they will have economic and social counterparts. If the tourism industry wants communities to become strongly involved in it, the profit for those communities must be considered.

If, on one hand, systems need to consider tourism potential capable of generating profits, they should also consider ways to engage communities around these resources, thus reinforcing a relationship of complementarity and interdependence between resources and communities.

The survival of Sustainable Tourism is largely based in this reciprocity. As paradoxical as it may seem, the isolation of certain communities is a key factor for internal unity and involvement around their traditions and their knowledge. This isolation also affects the tourist. Everything happens as if by magic atmosphere and spirit of places, the tourist absorbs real or imagined characteristics of indigenous: the tourist is active in the mountains (...) is romantic in Paris (Amirou, 2007). This was the conclusion we drew from the observation carried out in the region of Barroso, specifically in Montalegre of the Peneda Gerês National Park at the North of Portugal.

The gastronomy, as a tourism and transversal product that affects all tourism in general, has gained a remarkable economic role in Montalegre and its region. We found in the same region the case of another village named Boticas that has already organized several editions of the "Food Fair of the Pig". The event, according to the local mayor, has positively motivated local communities in order to dedicate themselves a lot more to the production of these cured meats.

On the other hand, through these kinds of traditions, there has been seen a sort of competition between the communities of Boticas and Montalegre. The institutional role as the driving force of this po-

tential has been decisive. The construction of the Pavilion to make the big event of the locality is an example that reinforces this belief. After this construction it is interesting to note the following facts: the growing membership of the community and the larger number of visitors. Therefore the business has been rising. (Almeida, 2007).

This gives rise to the appearance of communities competing with their products. This competition reflects a regional identity assumption, widely open to media coverage. Within this process there can be found communities that aim to be the best in their region, but, at the same time, must not and do not want to put aside some sort of unity, when the statement of their regional culture, is at stake.

A visible consequence of these sparse practices is the emergence of tourist opportunities differentiated by their Objective Authenticity (Wang, 1999) which is proven as a factual matter, for example, through the dating of objects through the carbon 14 and by its propensity to awaken the imagination of tourists, thus transporting them to a sense of nostalgia of the times that were considered outdated.

In a world where differences are extremely valued, it's up to the communities to bring together the best position, in order to undertake and promote its natural and cultural values. It's also up to the communities to gather natural conditions that transmit the essential concept of authenticity of the offer.

The greater interest of development and planning in tourism is the sustainability of the destiny and its long stay in the market (Yoon & Uysal, 2003). Montalegre has the merit of promoting this reality and has nowadays the responsibility to prevent the proliferation of industrial food, which implies an unwanted intrusion of the inauthentic.

#### *The inter-community competition as a factor for differentiation and sustainability*

In Portugal, more specifically in Montalegre, rivalries over land are known. The ancient image that in Barroso, one person may kill just for one piece of land is not exactly an exaggeration. Cases of violence because of the properties are regular topics of conversation in taverns in the villages of the region. In fact there are reported cases of conflicts that resulted in tragedy.

There is among communities of Barroso a very special relationship based on strong rivalries and, on the other hand, in a deep sense of solidarity and collective pride in belonging to the "Barrolean land". This collective attitude intensifies in the presence of strangers. Making an immediate observation of common sense, they would not see these rivalries.

Engaging popular traditions in a healthy competition to mobilize and involve them as instruments of and for the Globalization, thus stimulating the Identity Assumption and promoting and asserting the

regional culture, stimulating the assumption of identity and promoting a positive vicious circle, are some of the positive dynamics registered in certain communities of the municipalities of Montalegre, Chaves and Boticas.

“Chegas de Bois” (Ox fighting) is an example of a healthy competition among communities in which Barroso is embodied in promoting regional identity. Each village has its “Ox”. The “Ox of the People” attests for the collective pride of the village, which is keen on showing its “superiority” over the ox of the neighbouring village and vice versa.

They are the “People’s Ox” because they are an important asset of the communities and villages. The animals are fed on pastures that belong to everyone, they receive hay, grain and water provided by everyone, and spend the night in a house (“corte” a sort of stable) that is part of the assets of all the villagers. The animal that will fight is a factor of unity and solidarity of communities. The winner represents solidarity and pride throughout the region before visitors.

Each year, a shepherd chooses the ox that he will look after for an entire year, initiating it in a fight and competition with other cattle. This is, however, a contest with single identity. There is no death. The ox fights naturally for its ruling position as male, and, in Barroso, the oxen of the people are ultimately a source of pride for everyone, even in the hour of defeat.

In this context the ox displays a fundamental characteristic of aggregation of the village: the animal is aggressive only towards strangers. It is nevertheless interesting that it is a competition that leads to marriage and not discord as in regular competitions shown by the media.

The “Chega” (fight) can be quick or long, where the contenders are from the same template. In any case, the enthusiasm of the assistants is indescribable. The end of this competition can happen when the Ox runs away, taking the defeat or when an animal is wounded by the onslaught of his opponent. For their owners these are moments of elation, almost of glory. Yet, there is here a curious fact.

Given the expectation and pride of a view by thousands of strangers, the villages that face, they do so primarily on the sly (in a sort of *off record*) and only advance to the public spectacle when animals show that they are able to show the strength of being “barrolean” or the virility of the people in all the villages nearby. The fights are a real feast of music and of course cuisine. In the end, the image that remains is the “Chegas de Bois” from Montalegre.

The winning animal becomes almost revered by the owners. There are examples of villages in which the reverence for the animal champion is exposed by the construction of a statue with granite of the region. The winning animal is also coveted by neighbouring villages, thus becoming a breeding male, providing extra income to its owners.

Villagers and farmers of Barroso continue to vibrate with the same enthusiasm for any of the “chegas” (fight) that will be performed on the occasion of the annual festivals of every village, now an evocation of folk, which managed to survive to the passage of time and the forgetting of day-to-day hard communitarian life of Trás-os-Montes.

The competition extends to the “Cured Meats.” Each family, each home, has its own production with specific characteristics and tastes different from the neighbour. In the villages of Montalegre, a similar situation to the one that extends to Boticas and the villages of Chaves, each family makes an effort on showing that their *fumeiro* (sausages) are superior to their neighbours.

The curious thing is that there is a difference in attitude when families talk with outsiders, including tourists. In that case, the image conveyed is that “our *fumeiro*” is the best of Portugal. It is observed that the concentration of families in certain areas and consequent neighbourly relations and partnership give rise to competition and production. In Barroso, the pig is traditionally a source of survival. The Bízara species, autochthonous of the region, for its distinction in taste and texture of the meat, took a leading role.

However, we also observed that isolated families, lacking the incentive of a neighbourhood that has pride in its production, give less value to the “*fumeiro*”. The care and quantity are not the same. The division eventually results in competition and the competition ends up promoting the sharing. Basically, the isolation leads to the search for an excuse to interact, showing a spirit of corps through a tourism appealing activity: the gastronomy.

The variety of flavours of Cured Meats of Montalegre is so huge, almost infinite, because this range also changes every year. All producers want to show that they are better than the others. In the end, there is the “Feira do Fumeiro” de Montalegre, a tourism attraction rated by the local mayor in about five million euros. These numbers have a significant weight in the rural communities of the Peneda Geres National Park. The 2010 edition of the event registered about seventy thousand visitors.

In all its surroundings, in the winter, the show is a leading indicator of strategic economic performance. The event takes on a meaning far greater than the sales recorded in the event itself, including the sale of other products and the increased demand for hotel and tourism offer that the region has been witnessing.

Classifying the “*fumeiro*” and the ham of Montalegre as a “gold mine”, the mayor of Montalegre believes that in order to achieve the desired levels of revenue, there is the need for some level of business risk (which returned emigrants could account for if properly supported) and continuous improved levels of organization, particularly at the production and marketing.

This local politician says that “without obviously jeopardizing the authenticity of the product, you need to give a significant leap in production and sales, because this is something that has name and market quality.” In parallel with the desire of helping to preserve the tradition and culture as a major priority and concern, the municipality of Montalegre is the only financial supporter of the event, willing also to strengthen the Meats Fair as a definite economic event.

That’s why the city council has made major investments to improve the event, providing a new space for it to be held in, The Exhibition Park and Fair, a project of about 9 million euros, covering a place of about 2 thousand square meters. The promotion of local products has been made precisely in order to harness the economic potential of the region increasingly viewed as a part of the country that has much to offer in terms of national tourism authenticity.

The Mayor Fernando Rodriguez strongly believes that the Meats Fair is a major cause of attraction, and a sign of this fact is that the hotel units, in times of Fair, become completely full in terms of occupation and in the weekend in question, the event provides the movement of 1 million and 250 thousand euros, which “for a rural and weak economy as Montalegre has a very important meaning. The Mayor underlined the vicious cycle that the latest event results provide, leading to the involvement of communities and hence the enhancement of the event.

The cooperation between producers could prove itself as an asset to achieve more ambitious targets. “The Meats Fair of Montalegre” is helping to retain customers, to enhance and improve the quality of production, and as a sign of this importance, Montalegre has already licensed a number of kitchens compliant with all hygiene and health standards. The Meats Fair is the biggest event in the region, being normal, year after year, to sell sixty tons of products.

The success of the event is also linked to tourism and economic opportunities that can be generated in one specific place. Thus, the festivals in rural areas can play an important role in economic development (Calado, 2007).

There are many specialties: the “bocheira”, various types of sausages, several pieces of smoked parts of pork, and the inevitable ham, capable of seducing the most demanding palates. In Montalegre, the population has learned the ancient habits of each family to produce his single “fumeiro”, stating it and competing with the neighbours. This turns out to be a factor that promotes community cohesion.

This healthy competition is a characteristic of the Meats Fair, and in the 2005 edition appeared (so far) the largest and heaviest hams ever: fifty-three kgs (116.6 lbs) each. The healthy way to compete is illustrated by the fact that giant hams were not offered for sale, their owners stating that they were still not properly smoked and fitted for sale. However, the products were exposed to be admired.

According to the owner of the hams, to all who stopped to admire the phenomenon, the pig that provided the hams was raised in the village of Tourém and weighed nearly 889 kgs (400 lbs). To this reality (the need to exhibit and compete) there is always associated a context of gathering and conviviality between local communities who admire and take pride in their local rarities. This reality is crucial in providing an atmosphere in which the community sees its skills recognized in a gastronomic event that is already a reference in Portugal and even in Galicia, Spain.

To harness the full potential of the natural, patrimonial and cultural values, valuing and preserving them, is the major objective of the municipality for the coming period, including the creation of the Eco-Museum. What is clearly differentiating is pointed out as a strategic solution.

The Cured Meats, the gastronomy and traditions in general are factors that may embody a cultural platform in the territories of the communities involved, a platform that can leverage a sustainable tourism that takes into account the new requirements of the sector. There are countless benefits that can arise with the stimulation and promotion of these products, characterized by strong transversality, affecting the whole community.

The idea of planning tourism, besides governments, must be a process that encompasses the notion of stakeholders, including local community and the public interest (Hall, 2000).

The gastronomy, the “chegas de bois” (ox fight), folk music and the deep rural environment, are a mixture that provides a very unique and authentic environment based on a strong cultural identity of communities, who, on the one hand, are committed to assuming their traditions and, on the other hand, are proud to display them amongst outsiders.

This view turns out to be a form of statement for an outside world that has always abandoned these lands. But also shows that locals are committed to point out: “we never needed others to take hands of our affairs; at most we’ll work abroad.” (Polanah, 1987). Emigrants return to their land with the desire to help their community and its development.

In practical terms we see that the Meats Fair and “Chegas de Bois” are initiatives that complement one another, approaching and involving local communities around activities taken as authentic, from the point of view of local and regional cultural identity. In the perspective of the tourist, everything is in harmony regarding the natural and cultural environment.

Thus, heritage appears as a construction of modernity, an artifice created towards the strengthening of something belonging to the same symbolic space, assigning a transcendence of certain cultural symbols that prove the uniqueness of a particular community (Bomfim, 2006).



Moreover, we noted that in this case, tourism experience is integrated through multi-faceted folk practices. The experience is reported by tourists as fundamental to their personal development. The fact that tourists enter the environment of a community is revealed as central to achieving these objectives. The attitudes of the villagers to maintain close relations with visitors, relations described by tourists as “family relationships”, is fundamental for the differentiation of these tourism experiences.

## CONCLUSIONS

The gastronomy as a transversal tourism product, that affects all tourism in general, has taken a remarkable economic role in Montalegre and its region. We found in the same region the case of another village named Boticas that has already organized several editions of the “Food Fair of the Pig”. The event, according to the local mayor, has positively motivated local communities in order to dedicate themselves more to these cured meats.

On the other hand, we can see this competition between communities of Boticas and Montalegre, through their traditions. The institutional role as the driving force of this potential has been decisive. By organizing events that embody the pride of being Barroesean in the eyes of the outside world, the municipality has achieved to put Montalegre tourism in the a calendar based on the values of authenticity, imaginary and nostalgia, thus following a tourism perspective of prestige that Harkin underlines as a sustainable alternative to mass offer.

Montalegre, with its unique landscapes, hospitable communities, silence and peace, with restaurants serving genuine “Cozido à Transmontana” and “Fumeiro Barrosão” or, on the other hand, in summer, with its river beaches, hunting and fishing are potentials that can be assumed as differentiated tourism products.

Without altering the economic weight of mass products, Portugal needs to diversify its tourism offerings. This diversification will be based on platforms of cultural characteristics of each territory, determined largely by the involvement of their communities. The cultural diversity of the Portuguese territory, which is visible in the diversity of their gastronomy, is from this perspective an advantage to be taken into account.

Recently, Portuguese authorities published a study, according to which, Culture and Gastronomy in particular, attract more foreign tourists, regardless of their origin. Portugal must assume this distinction in terms of gastronomy, which is a major structural issue. Despite these considerations, we should underline the statements of the mayors involved in this region, according to which, without a clear com-

mitment to professional training, these objectives will not be met in wider regions.

State intervention is indispensable, as is the government's recognition to unlock the potential of the tourism sector. It is the government's responsibility to encourage investment, facilitate innovation and the creation of employment opportunities. It's also its responsibility to ensure respect for the environment, culture and social welfare of local communities (Lopes, 2010).

In Portugal, this implies that we must provide a platform for an attractive cultural territory, based on authenticity and community involvement. The Meats Fair of Montalegre reflects this reality, largely materialized by inter-community competition and collective community pride of being from Barroso.

The news, especially by television, when broadcasting the local self-esteem, may play an important role in involving these communities around their collective cultural values. The new cultural intermediaries are thus a key instrument of globalization for the involvement of communities around their assets, thus achieving the desired assumption of the power of Identity.

In a world where differences are valued, it will be up to the communities to bring together the best position to undertake and promote its natural and cultural values. It's up to the communities to gather natural conditions to transmit the essential concept of authenticity of their offer. Montalegre had the merit of promoting this reality and now has the responsibility to prevent an unwanted intrusion of inauthentic, or in other words, food produced in large scales.

In Montalegre we observed the following impacts related to the production of Fumeiro Products:

- The creation of jobs linked to the activity.
- The increase of confidence levels of the local population.
- The emergence of professional training courses in tourism, (for professional activities in hotels and restaurants).
- The growing demand for products related to the "Fumeiro", leading farmers to believe in a plan that lasts throughout the year and not just during the course of the Meats Fair.
- The increase in recent years of the local hotels, because of the impact of the event that each year attracts thousands of tourists.
- The awareness of local government, for the importance of traditional products.
- The increase of the importance in the promotion of other traditional initiatives, directly or indirectly related to the Meats Fair.

For certain regions, tourism emerged as the only real alternative for their economic growth. Once discovered and developed, tourism at-

traction, operating as a motor of activity over the region, will design some effects sustained in complementing the local activities (Cabugueira, 2005).

As we said before, this case study helped us to realise that tourism systems face a daunting challenge: to diagnose tools that involve their communities around their legacy and cultural environmental. Competition between neighbouring communities and the consequent assumption of identity is an example that illustrates the embodiment of this process. Rather than compete for markets, it is necessary to create new markets and have capacity to act and to provide (Hamel 2005). Therefore it is interesting to investigate other mechanisms for community involvement.

## REFERENCES

Almeida, A. A. (2007). *Contributions des Traditions Populaires pour une Nouvelle Culture du Tourisme au Portugal – les cas du Parque National de Peneda Gerês* – Thèse de Doctorat – Université de Perpignan.

Amirou, R. (2007). *Imaginário Turístico e Sociabilidades de Viagem*. Porto: Edição Estratégias Criativas, Associação Portuguesa de Turismologia.

Bomfim, N. R. (2006). “Uma perspectiva educacional da relação entre cultura e ambiente”. *Encontro de Geografia da UNICSUL – Território, Sociedade e Meio Ambiente*. São Paulo.

Cabugueira, A. (2005). “A Importância Económica do Turismo”. *Turismo e Desenvolvimento, Vol. 2* (pp. 97-104).

Calado, V. G. (2007). “Transe Psicadélico, Drogas Sintéticas e Paraísos Artificiais – Representações”. Uma análise a partir do ciberespaço; *Toxicodependências, 13*(1), 21-28.

Castells, M. (1999). *O Poder da Identidade*. S. Paulo: Paz e Terra.

Correia, A., & Moital, M. (2009). The antecedents and consequences of prestige motivation in tourism; an expectancy-value motivation, In Kozak, M. & Decrop, A. (Eds.), *Handbook of Tourism Behaviour: Theory & Practice*. Routledge.

Fortuna, C. (1997). *Cidade, Cultura e Globalização*. Oeiras: Celta Editora.

Hall, C. M. (2000). The integrated tourism planning process: dealing with interdependence. In C. M. Hall (Ed.), *Tourism Planning Policies Processes and Relationships*. England: Pearson Education Limited.

Hamel, G. (2005). *Competindo pelo futuro*. Rio de Janeiro: Elsevier.

Lopes, E. R. (2010). *A Constelação do Turismo na Economia Portuguesa*. Estudo Saer, Edição Jornal Sol.

Martins, E. C. (2002). *O Turismo como Alternativa de Desenvolvimento Sustentável*. São Paulo: Escola Superior de Agricultura Luíz de Queiroz, Universidade de São Paulo.

Polanah, L. (1987). *Comunidades Camponesas no Parque Nacional da Peneda Gerês – 2ª Edição*. Lisboa: Serviço Nacional de Parques Reservas e Conservação da Natureza.

Tomazzoni, E. L. (2001). *Organização de feiras de negócios*. PPGTUR. Caxias do Sul: Universidade de Caxias do Sul – UCS.

Wang, N. (1999). Rethinking authenticity in tourism experience. *Annals of Tourism Research*, 26(2): 349-370.

Yoon, Y., & Uysal, M. (2003). An examination of the effects of motivation and satisfaction on destination loyalty: A structural model. *Tourism Management*, 26, 45–56.

*Submitted: 10<sup>th</sup> September 2010 Final version: 15<sup>th</sup> October 2010 Accepted: 4<sup>th</sup> November 2010 Refereed anonymously*