

Talha Wine as a Differentiation Factor of Alentejo's Wine Tourism Offer

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Abstract

Rural regions are reinventing themselves as consumption places. Tourism appears as a diversification economic activity, used to overcome the demographic and economic constraints these regions face. This strategy is expected to be more effective if the tourism type to be developed is connected to an economic activity currently taking place in the region. In the case of wine regions, wine tourism appears naturally, associated with the wine culture these regions already celebrate. The case of Alentejo, more than conventional wine production, it presents a winemaking method, named Talha wine, which dates to the Roman era. This is the main subject under analysis in the present study. The goal is to assess if this wine has the potential to differentiate Alentejo from other wine tourism destinations.

To accomplish the proposed goal, both primary and secondary data were collected. Regarding the literature review, a funnel type of research was performed, from the most general tourism led economic development theories to the contextualization of the region and the product. Primary data was collected through interviews with producers, touristic operators and different public entities. Further on, the qualitative data analysis software Atlas.ti aided in the insights' extraction from the interviews' transcripts.

The combination of both data types collected allowed to identify the unexplored potential of Talha wine in both wine and cultural tourism in the territory. Nonetheless, and primarily due to its production limitation, this product is seen as a valuable complement but not a main vehicle for the touristic activity of Alentejo.

Keywords: Tourism Development, Wine Tourism, Talha Wine, Alentejo

JEL classification system: M31; Z32

Resumo

As regiões rurais estão a reinventar-se como locais de consumo. O turismo tem sido usado para diversificar a atividade económica, com o objetivo de ultrapassar as limitações demográficas e económicas que estas regiões enfrentam. É expectável que esta estratégia seja mais eficaz se o tipo de turismo desenvolvido estiver ligado a uma atividade económica relevante na região. No caso das regiões vinícolas, o enoturismo surge naturalmente, associado à cultura do vinho celebrada nestas regiões. O Alentejo, para além da convencional produção de vinho, apresenta um método de vinificação, denominado Vinho de Talha, que remonta à época romana. O objetivo da presente dissertação é avaliar se este vinho tem potencial para diferenciar o Alentejo relativamente a outros destinos de enoturismo.

Para alcançar o objetivo proposto, foram recolhidos dados primários e secundários. Relativamente à revisão da literatura, foi realizada uma pesquisa em funil, desde as teorias gerais de desenvolvimento económico alicerçado pelo turismo até à contextualização da região e do produto. Os dados primários foram recolhidos através de entrevistas com produtores, operadores turísticos e diferentes entidades públicas. Complementarmente, o software de análise Atlas.ti auxiliou na extração de resultados relevantes a partir das transcrições das entrevistas.

A combinação de ambos os tipos de dados recolhidos permitiu identificar o potencial não explorado do Vinho de Talha, tanto no enoturismo como no turismo cultural no território. No entanto, e principalmente devido às suas limitações de produção, este produto é visto como um complemento valioso, mas não um veículo principal para a atividade turística do Alentejo.

Palavras-chave: Desenvolvimento do Turismo, Enoturismo, Vinho de Talha, Alentejo

Sistema de classificação JEL: M31; Z32

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1. Introduction

The idea under analysis in the present study is to explore the potential of a regional product in its impact on local tourism sector in terms of its differentiation. In concrete, the research will consider the case of wine tourism in Alentejo and Talha wine as a potential differentiation factor. The present section will present the general theme, the goals the study aims to achieve, the methodology applied and the dissertation's structure.

1.1. Theme

Tourism sector contributed with 10.5 % to the world's GDP in 2018. This value puts the tourism industry as one with of the biggest representativeness in the world's GDP, growing more than the global economy (3.9% Vs. 3.2%), accordingly to World Travel and Tourism Council (2019). Based on these numbers is possible to say that tourism presents an opportunity for economic development, if strategically planned for this purpose. For a region to take part of this ongoing phenomenon, it must rely on offering authentic experiences allied to the differentiatonal physical assets it disposes. These experiences, conveniently available for visitors, are generally extended to the 'living culture' and the atmosphere of places (Wilson, 2002). Physical assets are not enough to sell a place if they cannot provide a long-lasting memory of a once in a lifetime experience. To transform goods and services in competitive advantages, producers must differentiate their products by transforming, or include them, into experiences, capable of engaging the guest (Amin and Thrift, 2002).

The present study will concern the Portuguese region of Alentejo, primarily known for its vast wine culture. Considering the importance of image in the creation of experiences, wine production may constitute a competitive advantage and Alentejo has the opportunity to develop wine tourism. Wine tourism is currently the driver of tourism in Alentejo, but its potential can be further explored. Alentejo's wine tourism offer has been internationally awarded since 2014, when it was considered by National Geographic Traveler as one of the 21 best places to visit and by USA Today the number one wine region globally. After years of been distinguish for its quality, Alentejo was again considered to be among the 6 wine regions to visit in 2020 by Condé Nast Traveler (Giannatempo, 2019).

1.2. Research Goals

The present dissertation is based on the idea of how a traditional product can attract visitors to its region of origin, differentiating the regional tourism sector. The economic potential of such products might go further than the financial gains resultant from sales volume. These products may be used to leverage the tourism industry and contribute to the destination branding of their place of origin.

Since this dissertation is focused on Alentejo, the chosen product was Talha wine. Only made in this region, it appears as a potential differentiation factor. Alentejo is a region that lacks the most common touristic features that usually move masses seasonally. In this sense, the competitive advantages of Alentejo are the details of its culture and natural environment. For this reason, the recognition of the quality and authenticity of local gastronomy and wine production as well as the built and natural patrimony, gain relevance to position Alentejo in the potential guests' minds. Alentejo has currently two sites classified as UNESCO World Heritage, the historical centre on Évora and Elvas and its fortifications. UNESCO Intangible Heritage list also includes Cante Alentejano, manufacture of cowbells and craftsmanship of Estremoz clay figures. Talha wine is currently under the process to join these other cultural traits as Intangible Heritage. This way contributing for the recognition of the local culture authenticity and preservation.

Talha wine, for only being produced in Alentejo and for its millennial history, may create the desire, by appealing to visitors' curiosity, to visit the interior region with the purpose of contact with this unique culture. Talha wine is described as a unique wine and as a product that can only be fully understood if consumed in Alentejo, accompanied by the typical gastronomical gems and in the animated ambiance of the local taverns with locals. As this is a multifaceted experience, combining gastronomy, ambiance and musical elements, it cannot be replicated elsewhere, even if the wine can be purchased outside the region of origin (Loureiro, 2016). Considering the specific characteristics of Talha wine, its connection to the territory and to the resident population, the present dissertation aims to clarify: Does Talha wine has the potential to become a differentiation feature of Alentejo as a wine tourism destination? To fully address the proposed research question, two sub questions will be analysed (1) what is the role of Talha wine in the wine tourism

panorama today and (2) what are the expectations from stakeholders for the future of Talha wine regarding its touristic potential.

It is also relevant to establish that the study analyses the product from the perspective of institutional stakeholders and suppliers, namely, wineries with production of Talha wine, governmental entities, advisory enterprises, touristic animation companies and investigators. The study was able to gather their points of view and identify common places and divergencies. The main focus was to understand how these interested stakeholders see the touristic context in which the product should *versus* is being explored today, as well as what is expected for the future of the wine tourism in general and Talha wine in particular.

1.3. Methodology

To clarify the questions asked and to achieve the goal of understanding the potential of Talha wine in Alentejo's wine tourism panorama, the stakeholders' perspectives were collected. To deeply analyse the interest variables, the methodology applied was interviews. A set of general topics and open-ended questions was elaborated to make sure all the respondents would pronounce on the same subjects but, at the same time, guarantee the freedom to add or emphasize aspects of greater relevance. The conversations were recorded, with the approval of all interviewees, with the purpose of being transcribed and coded with the assistance of Atlas.ti software for qualitative analysis performance. This allowed to identify main categories of themes addressed and if the opinions converged or diverged for each one.

Regarding the performed empirical research, it is also important to contextualize the conditions under which was carried out. All the interviews took place between March and April of 2020, during the outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic. These difficult times heavily impacted the study, since it was not possible to meet the interviewees in person, all the conversations were performed via phone call. Also, all the respondents mentioned the impact of uncertainty especially when inquired regarding their expectations for the future. Despite the unexpected events, the interviews script was not altered to ensure the consistency of the gathered data.

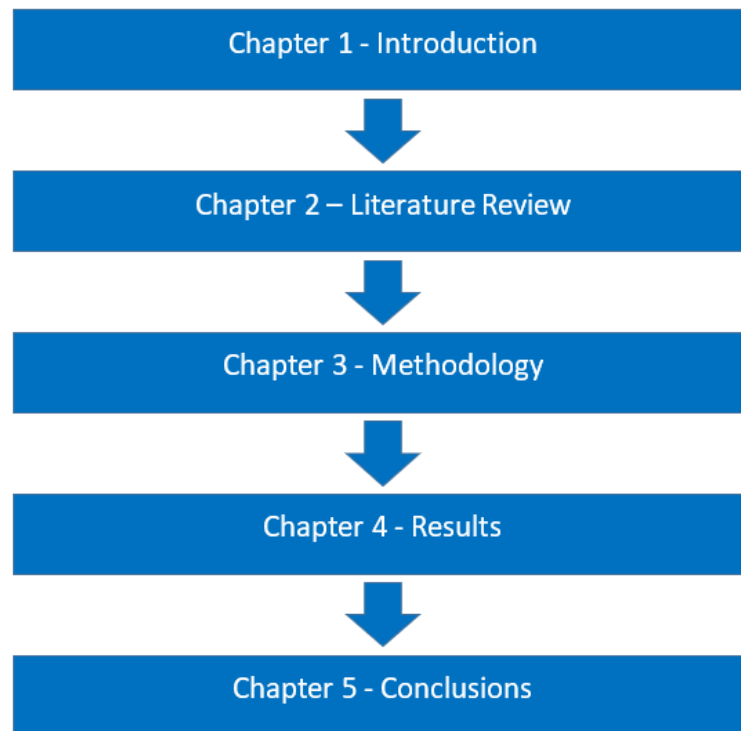
1.4. Structure

The present dissertation consists in 6 chapters, being the first one the introduction where the research is contextualized and the main research question is specified.

Following the presentation of the topics to be developed, the literature review is organized from the broadest to the most specific relevant topics. The first part aims to present tourism as a tool for economic development. Previous studies show this is not a consensual subject and therefore different perspectives are presented. The second part reflects on how tourism could contribute to solve the current constraints faced by rural areas and what kind of touristic activities are already taking place in these territories. The third segment of literature review aims to define wine tourism and characterize the wine tourist, highlighting the role this tourism modality has in rural areas. Despite all the main concepts are defined at this point, the literature review will present two more parts dedicated to the contextualization of both the region and the product. These parts aim to frame the environment in which the empirical study will take place. Regarding the region, is detailed what projects are already in place regarding wine tourism and what outcomes are possible to analyse from them. Regarding the product, it is historically contextualized, the production procedure is explained and the cultural aspects of it are enhanced.

The fourth chapter is the methodology, where the researcher exhibits and details the research techniques used to better achieve relevant insights on the topic. In this part is possible to find the logic behind the choice of performing a qualitative research and the conduction of interviews for data collection. The criteria for sample selection, the process of script construction and posterior data analysis are also detailed. The results from the empirical study are present next. In this chapter, the main insights from the interviews are organized in 7 main categories and several subcategories. These results will, together with the literature review, support the following set of conclusions. This last chapter will differentiate theoretical from managerial contributions, and a reflection on the study limitations and future research.

Figure 1. Dissertation structure



Source: Own Elaboration

2. Literature review

To properly assess the impact of a local product in the general economic panorama of the region is necessary to take several steps back to understand the context where this would be introduced. To understand this relation is important to clarify the role of tourism in economic development, the role of tourism in development of rural regions and the importance of wine tourism in this panorama.

2.1. Tourism and Economic Development

In literature is possible to find a vast amount of published studies regarding the tourism led economic growth hypothesis, which defines that tourism generates economic growth from an econometric perspective (Pablo-Romero and Molina, 2013). Despite the attention and resources dedicated to prove this hypothesis in the past decades, the cause and consequence relationship of tourism and economic development appears to be non-consensual with inconsistent results from causal relations, bi-directional causality and even economy-driven tourism growth (Tang and Jang, 2009). Sinclair (1998) stated that to properly conclude about tourism as a form of economic growth, every researcher should consider both the advantages and the disadvantages of this industry impacting on the economy under analyse. Each economy should be analysed without the bias of any preconceived idea of what should be the normal relationship. To summarize the lack of consensus regarding this question, Lee and Chang (2008) elaborated a table exhibiting the contradictory results of some of the most relevant studies done until their time on this subject.

Table 1 Comparison of the empirical results for tourism development and economic growth.

Samples	Authors	Empirical method	Period	Countries	Causal relationship
One country	Balaguer and Cantavella-Jorda (2002)	Error correction model	1975–1997	Spain	Tourism⇒growth
	Dritsakis (2004)	Error correction model	1960–2000	Greece	Tourism⇔growth
	Durberry (2004)	Error correction model	1952–1999	Mauritius	Tourism⇔growth
	Kim et al. (2006)	Granger causality test	1971–2003	Taiwan	Tourism⇔growth
	Narayan (2004)	Error correction model	1970–2000	Fiji	Growth⇒tourism
	Ghali (1976)	OLS	1953–1970	Hawaii	Tourism⇒growth
	Oh (2005)	Granger causality test	1975–2001	Korea	Growth⇒tourism
Cross-section	Lanza et al. (2003)	Almost ideal demand system (AIDS)	1977–1992	13 OECD countries	Tourism⇒growth
	Eugenio-Martín and Morales (2004)	Panel GLS	1980–1997	Latin countries American	Tourism⇒growth (in low- and medium-income countries but not in high-income countries)

Note: “Tourism ⇒ growth” denotes causality running from tourism development to economic growth. “Growth ⇒ tourism” denotes causality running from economic growth to tourism development. “Tourism ⇔ growth” denotes bidirectional causality between tourism development and economic growth.

Source: Lee and Chang (2008)

Despite the lack of conclusion in this regard, there are several examples of destinations that introduce a specific type of tourism modality or touristic product and witness real socioeconomic development. Recent studies have been conducted to clarify this issue. One case study (Kurek *et al.*, 2020) where the touristic product was geothermal spas in different Polish municipalities, presented a positive relation between the introduction of the touristic product and the development of the municipalities that solidly verified this relation was positive. This is an example where the introduction of a new product served as a trigger that severely impacted the region as a tourism destination. The growth verified in these municipalities relies to the usage of local resources, creation of employment for residents, tax revenues and infrastructure improvement. These coincide with the commonly indicated main positive outcomes when corroborating tourism as development tool.

Since it is commonly agreed that tourism led economic growth hypothesis's acceptance varies accordingly the economy under study, one of the most generally accepted conditions in which the theory relies on, is the relative size on this industry in the economy. The more weight tourism has in the economy, the stronger will be the relation between tourism development and economic growth. Not only due to the direct receipts of the sector, but also, the development of related sectors and spillovers to other industries. The size of the economy appears to be relevant as well, as the smaller economies seem to have a higher sensitivity to be positively impacted by the development of the tourism industry (Pablo-Romero and Molina, 2013). All governments should perform this assessment to adapt policies in two ways. In the case of economic growth being tourism led, investment should prioritize tourism industry and a positive impact will be expected in the economy. When tourism is positively impacted by economic growth, then investment in other main industries should be made and a positive impact in tourism expansion is expected (Chen and Chiou-Wei, 2009). Bi-directional relation settles that investment in tourism leads to economic benefits, as investment in other industries also impact positively tourism development, as a growing spiral. In Europe, tourism growth has been higher than economic growth after the last financial crisis (Dogru and Bulut, 2018).

Regarding the veracity of this hypothesis in time, in the long run the development of tourism does not have a relation with the economy, so it is not central for economic growth (Tang and Jang, 2009). For the same reason, techniques for tourism development can be successful even

in time of economic stagnation. In what concerns the short run, the effects of economy do not affect the tourism industry deeply. Other authors defend that the marginal effect of tourism appears to decrease over time depending on the level of specialization of the economy in this sector (Pablo-Romero and Molina, 2013). Either way, this represents a useful insight for policymakers once it can determinate the timing of investments and optimizing the usage of resources by industry (Tang and Jang, 2009).

Is also relevant to mention the impact of uncertainty in this matter. In case of uncertainty presence in either economy in general or in tourism industry particularly, a negative effect is expected on the other (Chen and Chiou-Wei, 2009). As an example of a tourism industry that suffered from economic uncertainty, is possible to name Spain, after analysing the impact of the most recent economic crises (Perles-Ribes *et al.*, 2017). The exogenous variables which strongly affect tourism and create uncertain environments are political and economic stability, health security, terrorism and other armed conflicts and natural catastrophes (Pablo-Romero and Molina, 2013).

The absence of a general conclusion may also be explained by the controversy of the Tourism Income Multiplier, especially when considering that a portion of the added value created by tourism does not stay in the host country economy (Roldán, 1993). In order to explain this divergency a study demonstrated that the relationship between tourism activity and economic growth differs accordingly with the level of economic development of the country. By separating the countries in two groups in possible to ascertain for those which indexes for economic development are higher, this relationship seems to be positive. As for the ones with lower indexes for economic development this relationship cesses to exist (Cárdenas – García, *et al.*, 2013).

The authors also alert for the benefits for foreign investors, as for those the increase of tourism flows lead to financial benefits, but this kind of investment does not imply any benefits for the local population. This occurs when the touristic products are assembled, managed and sold by foreign operators (Roldán, 1993). This means that despite the number of tourists a certain destination may attract, the real impact on the economy will be much lower than expected. In fact, the most recent research states at 80% of value drained out from local economies due to this phenomenon (Lynott and Motes, 2017). To contradict this effect and maximize the added value portion that stays and contributes for economic development, the touristic products, such as tours, accommodation, restaurants and cultural experiences must be provided by regional

operators. Some current trends may be part of the solutions for this retainment issue. In fact, tourists nowadays demand for more authentic cultural experiences and aim for involvement with local communities. This opens for huge opportunity window regarding local commerce, local accommodation and other small businesses to take part of this immense industry (Roldán, 1993).

Nonetheless, this line of thought is not a one fit all diagnosis tool. Faber and Gaubert (2019) performed a study based on 50 years of data collection in Mexico and found a positive multiplier effect on manufacturing production, meaning the investment and growth of local business related with tourism lead to cross-sector spillovers with traded goods production. This spillover effect was found to have a weight in 10 % of the total benefits generated by tourism.

2.1.1. Tourism as economic development in Rural Areas

Considering the current situation of rural areas in Europe, some issues have been pointed out by previous authors and authorities. The sustainability of the agricultural sector, the demographic and economic stagnation or decline (Dimitrovski *et al.*, 2012) and, particularly concerning, the scarcity of job offers (Ferreira and Hunter, 2017). An attempt to overcome these circumstances have been the general diversification of the industries operating in such regions, new industries related with gastronomy, cultural heritage or renewable energies are pointed out as possible solutions (Leuba, 2017). In fact, to leverage this phenomenon, a considerable number of rural areas have redefined themselves as consumption spaces where history and tradition take the spotlight from modern agricultural production as the differentiation features (Cloke, 1993).

In this new age of diversification, tourism industry appears as potential convergence tool in what concerns the present interregional economic development gap (Pablo-Romero and Molina, 2013; Loureiro and Kastenholz, 2011). Consequently, is pointed out as a mechanism to contradict the present difficulties of rural regions. Today is possible to find in literature the benefits of the development of cultural tourism in rural environments and how it can help to mitigate the socio-economic imbalances by improving the quality of life for residents and support the traditional culture. Regarding the demographic situation, rural tourism related businesses should be incentivized to retain young talent (Dimitrovski *et al.*, 2012). By raising the cooperation within communities to conserve and restore both natural and cultural resources, the overall sustainability of tourism and traditional lifestyles can be achieved (Peña *et al.*, 2012).

For this benefits to materialize, the tourism framework must imply each rural region to be analysed regarding its potential for different types of rural tourism activities, as a way to connect the forms of tourism practiced to the resources available and ensure their sustainability in providing a long term solution of the socioeconomical stress these regions are facing (Ayhan *et al.*, 2020). Along with this concern, must be added the importance of the local population needs, desires and characteristics which must be considered to respond to the issues each community faces (Drăgulănescu and Druțu, 2012; Pereira *et al.*, 2012).

Rural tourism is characterized by small or medium scale accommodation and restauration business, this prevents benefits from touristic activity from leaking out the destination. Firstly, these businesses usually rely on local suppliers. Secondly, the owners are more likely to be residents. In destinations where bigger companies offer standardized and all-inclusive packages, the economic linkages will be much weaker, and local business will not be able to thrive. As rural destinations are not appealing for these types of companies, is possible to maintain local networks where the visitors have the opportunity and necessity to visit several businesses during their stay (Jeyacheya and Hampton, 2020). As an example of this strategy, Su (2011) presented the decision of Chinese government to use tourism as the primary tool to boost the economy of their rural regions. All the benefits mentioned above seemed to be verified in this case. Not only the expectable socio economical positive consequences but also the cross-sectional benefits reflected in the revitalization of local' culture included items like crafts, music and dance, gastronomy, winemaking and alternative medicine. This strategy also allowed to fight the demographic tendency for aging population with the comeback of younger generations attracted by the new job opportunities and improvement in infrastructures.

This kind of touristic products not only assist in the territorial development cohesion, but also, aligns with the consumer behaviour trends found in literature. The strong percentage of travellers who are currently looking for diversify their destinations aiming for nature contact and memorable cultural experiences (Fons *et al.*, 2011). The quality of the physical patrimony, cultural traits and experiences based on them, gains relevance considering the shorter length of stay in rural areas compering to other types of destination (European Commission, 1999).

Despite the highlighted benefits of these activities, some obstacles that can be commonly found in rural areas and that have a direct impact in tourism were also a source of concern and research for previous authors. Namely, the lack or low quantity and quality of public services and infrastructures (Ciolac *et al.*, 2019); few options for accommodation, restaurants and activities

available, which can be a consequence of the current state of these economies (Ayhan *et al.*, 2020) and regarding human resources, the depopulation of some of these areas, the lack of language skills and other necessary attributes, the need for measures to attract and retain talented young population and the need for investment in education and training in the tourism field (Fons *et al.*, 2011). Su (2011) finds similar obstacles in the Chinese rural areas case, regarding the lack of education of the newly tourism business owners. The lack of skills is transversal to all business-related tasks, from the financial part, to public attendance and interpersonal ones. Evidencing the need for education and training in such areas.

As possible negative consequences comported by the tourism industry, and that must be considered, is the environmental impact, Since nature and landscape are the main features of rural tourism and compromising them also puts the tourism activity sustainability in jeopardy (Lun *et al.*, 2016). To prevent this form materializing, the preventively association of the socio economical needs of the local community with the environmental protection of the landscape where the activities will take place is suggested (Atun *et al.*, 2018). This is reinforced by the need to identify the most appropriated activities regarding the resources available and its perseverance needs of each area (Ayhan *et al.*, 2020). This will allow to maintain the authenticity and diversity, because the quality of the environment and landscape defines the quality of the region as a rural destination (Fons *et al.*, 2011).

Regarding the planning phase of the tourism strategy, Iorio and Corsale (2010) consider that the Government role should reach further from the distribution of income throughout the territory. In this sense, the Government should make possible for different rural areas of a country to benefit from the opportunity to engage with rural tourism trend. Coordination appears as a key word since these areas are mainly explored by local business which are responsible for authenticity and great benefits for employment and household income (Iorio and Corsale, 2010). Unplanned tourism development carries excessive pressure on the destination, putting at risk the sustainability of resources in the future, affecting life quality of the residents, as well as its own further development. Baring this in mind, authors alert for the urge for sustainable tourism planning (Estêvão *et al.*, 2019).

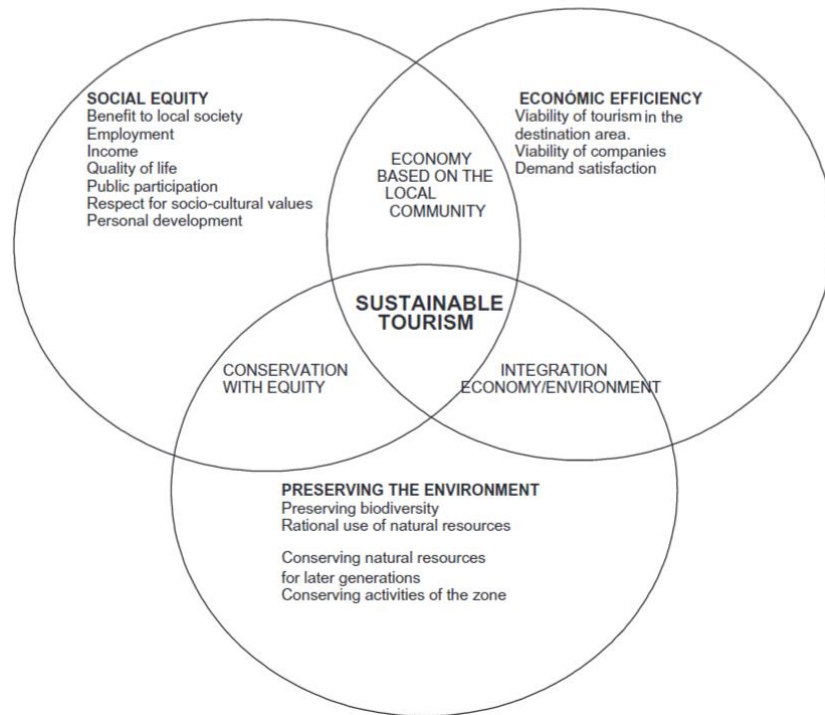
The authors also stated the basic conditions for the tourism industry to be established properly. Investments in public infrastructures, namely roads and transportation solutions, access to remote places and health facilities for both the locals and visitors, with response capacity in touristic peak seasons are critical. Also, incentives for entrepreneurs to establish their business

contributing for the touristic products portfolio of the region (Alhowaish, 2016; Dimitrovski *et al.*, 2012). To prevent the harmful consequences, it is the government's responsibility to adopt preventive measures limiting the natural resources exploitations, to mitigate the consequences of intense tourism flows (Fons *et al.*, 2011). Regarding Portugal, Bento (2006) reinforces how the tourism industry is relevant for the Portuguese economy and emphasises the role of domestic tourists and how the government should take them in consideration when formulating policies, along with the local population and foreigner tourists. This coordination of interests between local communities for the viability of the tourism sector is on the base for the creation of sustainable tourism in the long term. In detail, it was established that environment, socio-culture and economy are the three pillars to reach a solution capable of overcome the disadvantages from the exploration of rural areas for touristic purposes (Hall, 1998; Pereira *et al.*, 2012).

Despite that sustainable tourism is usually perceived to be a certain type of tourism, it was defined by United Nations Environment Programme and World Tourism Organization (2005) as a status that any type of tourism could aim to achieve. Bearing this in mind, the same documentation establishes roles and responsibilities, for each stakeholder. This must be a collective effort due to the difficulty of being carried out for only a few. Visitors are the main responsible and must respect the environments they visit while travelling and actively contribute for its preservation. Following this, all the goods and service providers must align their values and practices to minimize the negative outcomes of their activity. On a third level, the governmental institutions must design a strategy for the sector and lead the industry towards the desired sustainable status.

When developed in rural areas, sustainable tourism should be based on touristic activities complementary to the ongoing traditional agricultural activities and the income they provide must be seen as a supplement and not a substitute. Preserving the current routines of the community, and bringing back some old practices, can be considered a competitive advantage in rural tourism due to the authenticity it provides to the destination. (Fons *et al.*, 2011).

Figure 2 Sustainable Tourism Model

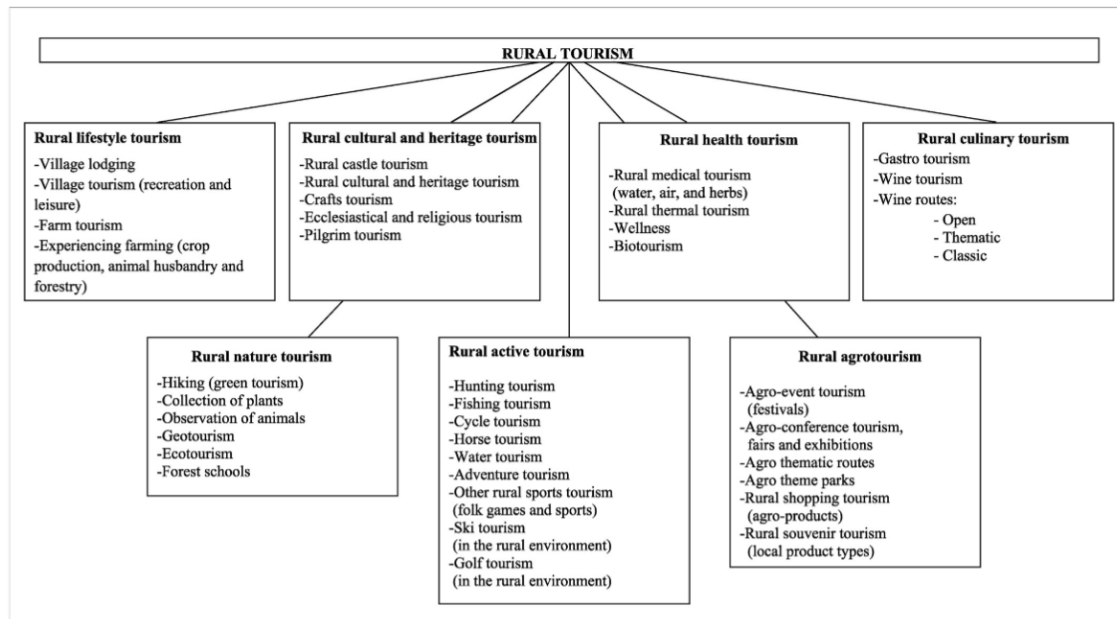


Source: Fons *et al.* (2011)

2.1.2. Rural Tourism trends

Tourism activities taking place in rural areas was the initial definition of rural tourism. But this definition was not enough to categorise it at all its extension. Today, there is no consensual definition for what rural tourism is (Ayhan *et al.*, 2020). Nevertheless, the most accepted definition was formulated by Hector Ceballos-Lascurain (1996) and implies that rural tourism must be environmentally responsible, with a low visitor's impact and should bring several benefits regarding culture and landscape conservation and well for the socio-economic situation. The main motivation for this practice is contact with nature and the respective local traditions and culture. Furthermore, it has also been considered an umbrella concept under which is possible to find specific definitions for each related tourism form. Considering the lack of a concise definition, the literature had therefore categorised the different activities and attractions these areas have to offer for segmentation, targeting and positioning purposes. Figure 2 presents a graphic explanation for the umbrella concept, including the sub types of tourism practiced in rural environment (Ayhan *et al.*, 2020).

Figure 3 Rural Tourism



Source: Dávid *et al.*, 2007

Ecotourism appears as one of the most common modalities of rural tourism and it can be even mistakenly confused with it, nevertheless this modality implies that the touristic product considered must have other characteristic additionally to the direct contact with nature in a rural environment. Viljoen and Tlabela (2007) settled some criterial to define it: the experiences must be neutral or contribute for the maintenance of the environment where they take place; they must be planned in detail so no adverse consequences can arise from it; must be economically viable in the long term, implying the sustainability of resources, and the economic benefits generated by it should remain in the local communities. This can include some sports activities with low impact on landscape, such as hiking, biking, canoeing and other without heavy or polluting equipment (Sasu and Epuran, 2016). This kind of tourism also integrates an educational facet in the way that educational campaigns are necessary for the understanding of the preservation values (Lourenço-Gomes, 2015).

Agritourism represents a form of rural tourism involving agriculture as main activity and tourism as a complementary, second source of income. Can be used as a tool for rural economy's diversification, providing sustainability for the agricultural business and simultaneously allowing the development of other complementary local business. This type of initiatives contributes for the visitors' satisfaction due to the increase in touristic products offer

this way appealing to a wider public. This type of tourism includes agriculture activities for the visitors involving them in the daily routines of the farms where they find accommodation (Sasu and Epuran, 2016)

Culture or heritage tourism is deeply related with experiencing first-hand the way of life of the locals. This implies direct contact with them and the display and explanation of cultural aspect to visitors (Sasu and Epuran, 2016). To be considered high quality tourism, those experiences should aim to be memorable. In the specific case of cultural experiences, this memorability relies on the pre-existing expectation of the experience and this can be determinant in the decision-making process as well as it impacts the experience itself (Seyfi *et al.*, 2019). Authenticity is one of the inherent characteristics pointed out as essential, as visitors should be able to distinguish the location based on local culture and it should be different from any other experience they had before. Engagement is also necessary, in the sense that the experience to be memorable should provoke high intensity emotions. Interaction with locals and integration on their daily life are also valuable for visitors. In those moments, general hospitality of residents plays a key role (Seyfi *et al.*, 2019). As Pine and Gilmore (1998) stated, one of the designing elements of experiences is the elimination of negative cues, and when the experience involves different touch points, is important the quality of service to be consistently high. Here is important to include not only direct hospitality service providers but also all different services used by visitors during their stay. This includes transportation, healthcare providers, among others. Also, infrastructure and accessibility influence the perception of the service quality (Seyfi *et al.*, 2019). Communication channels among partners must be available to allow information to flow and the creation of solid tourism product to be made available to visitors (Dujmović and Vitasović, 2016; Bilro *et al.*, 2019). Knowledgeable human resources must also be allocated to this activity once it contributes for the quality of the offered touristic product (Dujmović and Vitasović, 2016)

Gastronomic tourism, including wine and food routes, is also part of culture tourism since gastronomy is deeply connected with the traditions of a region and local people (Sasu and Epuran, 2016). For that reason, gastronomy cannot be overlooked when performing cultural experiences. This is one of the most impacting traits of culture regarding guest satisfaction and experience memorability (Seyfi *et al.*, 2019). This type of tourism occurs when tasting typical dishes and beverages is the main purpose of the visit (Sasu and Epuran, 2016). The connection between agriculture and tourism appeals to an increase on biological food production which

has a higher value and allows the local restaurants to increase the quality of their offer to visitors. This conserves the biodiversity of the region and creates a base for eco-tourism (Dimitrovski *et al.*, 2012). A study regarding the connection between tourism and the agriculture sector, in the case of Italy, showed that policies focusing on food and wine quality and their promotion have positive impact on the promotion of the region as a touristic destination (Santeramo *et al.*, 2017).

The strong linkage between rural and natural environments with sustainability and 'greenness' are rich sources of material for theming and attractiveness (Richards and Wilson, 2006). Despite the diversity of tourism modalities allowed by the development of touristic activities in rural areas, this type of tourism relies on the uniqueness of each region given by the preservation of cultural features such as typical gastronomy, lifestyle, artistic expressions and local products. A very common example of this phenomenon is the vast variety of festivals themed after local traditions and products. This kind of events create awareness for local producers in remote locations, that present authentic products. It is highly relevant for the economic development of such areas to create, in the potential consumer, the desire to visit the place and not only to consume the product. This desire is based on the experience the product can provide by proving this cannot be reproduced anywhere else (Richards and Wilson, 2006). Another ongoing trend is tourism projects, in rural areas, where entrepreneurs establish their new enterprises with creative activities like geology, painting, cooking, crafts or others with traditional and escapist features (Richards and Wilson, 2006).

All these aspects can be considered differentiatonal as they vary according to the destination. Differentiation features can be leveraged and used as competitive advantages by policy makers when planning for the tourism sector of a given region. So, when committed to use a specific cultural component as a symbol for the region, stakeholders must create touristic products for visitors themed after this traditional product or activity. Theme is the first milestone to build an experience, it must be well communicated to allow the guest to know what to expect beforehand (Pine and Gilmore, 1998). A study concerning the lavender tourism in Turkey (Giray *et al.*, 2019) suggested a marketing mix specially designed for this product. Some of the pointed out criterial can be generalized for the marketing mixes made for other cultural features used as a regional symbols. Investment in the cultural experience, such as proper facilities, guides, or any other specialized human resources, ready to provide any information and the necessary contextualization and other products or services to diversify the offer regarding the original

cultural aspect. Secondly, the experience should not be limited to the sales of the product or the cultural contextualization. Other services must be available such as restaurants, accommodation, local commerce, proper accessibility and signage. Regarding price, since this kind of experience mobilizes not only local business but also public budgets, a symbolic entrance fee as contribution for maintenance should apply to most cases. Also, price discrimination can appear as a tactic to appeal to different market segments. Concerning place, the main attractions must be well signed and accessible, it is also important that all points of interest can deliver relevant info on other important sites in the region. For promotion purposes, social media, storytelling, visitors shared content and website image appear as very effectively as it is free advertising and can be easily leveraged by companies by interacting with previous and potential visitors simultaneously (Giray *et al.*, 2019; Pereira *et al.*, 2017).

Some segments within the rural tourism market can be more desirable than others and policy makers should focus on their need and wishes. Visitors who deeply search for community connections could be pleased with co-creative experiences and storytelling initiative to increase their satisfaction, loyalty and even length of stay (Kastenholz *et al.*, 2018). The same authors also reinforce the importance of maintain the authenticity of those community related experiences and to avoid massification.

Regarding the rural tourism consumers, is possible to find a broad variety of profiles, depending on the geographical region under analyse. Nevertheless, the lack of consistency reveals a dynamic market with increasing interest from different segments (Eusébio *et al.*, 2017). A study based on Spanish rural visitors, identified the main triggers for rural areas visitation, ranking from relaxation and nature connection, monument visiting and cultural experiences, gastronomy and natural patrimony and relatives visiting (Devesa *et al.*, 2010). A similar study performed in France, identified the demographic characteristics of such visitors. They would primarily come from urban areas, would have middle class incomes and high education level. As for the length of stay, tend to be for very short or very long periods (Bel *et al.*, 2015). Regarding age ranges, all seems to be attracted to such areas (Bel *et al.*, 2015). A recent study by Lewis and D'Alessandro (2019) showed that the main motives why the elderly population would engage in rural tourism activities are the need to connect with friends, family and partner as well as the need to break the routine in a relaxing setting.

As for the Portuguese domestic tourist, a recent study was able to identify four main clusters. One of these are characterize for their wish for an immersive, multifaceted experience in the

countryside. This experience can include physical activities, co-creation cultural activities and the enjoyment of the relaxation typically allowed by these regions. Another cluster is formed by the visitors who do not get so involved within the community but instead focus on relaxation and wellbeing. A considerable part of visitors are the ones with family bonds to the region who do not engage in tourist activities but visit the territory. The last cluster is families spending their summer vacations in those regions, typically consume regional products and consider the countryside as an idyllic space (Eusébio *et al.*, 2017).

2.2. Wine tourism and Wine tourists

Charters and Ali-Knight (2002:312) present a definition for wine tourism: "Travel for the purpose of experiencing wineries and wine regions and their links to lifestyle. Wine tourism encompasses both service provision and destination marketing." To this definition, the authors add "...wine tourism encompass many characteristics including: a lifestyle experience, supply and demand, an educational component, linkages to art, wine and food, incorporation with the tourism-destination image and as a marketing opportunity which enhances the economic, social and cultural values of the region. The wine tourism experience can therefore be provided for in a number of ways, the most notable being events and festivals, cultural heritage, dining, hospitality, education, tasting and cellar door sales, and winery tours."

Wine consumption is always an experience, for the simple reason that the quality is unknown before opening the bottle. Having this in mind, wine tourism is seen as a way for wineries to build and/or change their reputation (Winfrey *et al.*, 2018; Loureiro and Kaufmann, 2012). This appears as a reconfirmation of the approach adopted by Getz (1998), which defends that wine tourism can be analysed from three perspectives: the first as a strategy by which destinations develop and create awareness about wine-related attractions and imagery; secondly, as a form of consumer behaviour, where those interested in wine and/or its production travel to preferred destinations and, finally, as an opportunity for wineries to educate consumers and sell their product directly to them. This phenomenon must relate and complement the already existing sales business carried out by the wineries (Winfrey *et al.*, 2018).

The quality of a wine experience can be perceived as the combination of the core wine related products, the territory endogenous traits and the complementary cultural and patrimonial heritage offer quality. This model was suggested by Gets and Brown (2006) and defines each of these three main pillars. Core wine products refers to the wineries facilities and how those

must be prepared for visitors and tastings, knowledgeable staff, wine related events, such as festivals, and traditional, family wineries. The second pillar refers to the landscape, climate conditions, accommodation cost, information available and signage for the wine routes. The last pillar regards the regional character of accommodation, the existence and maintenance of the traditional wine villages and the presence of gourmet gastronomy and fine dining restaurants.

Marzo-Navarro and Pedraja-Iglesias (2009) establish the main characteristics which differentiate a potential wine tourism from a non-potential wine tourist, as being the income level and the habitude of consuming wine. Once classified as wine tourists, and despite the level of involvement with wine, these visitors will not be positively impressed by large tours or popular wineries standard tastings. They are more willing to engage in small groups tours at selected wineries for tastings and pairing wines with regional gastronomy appears as a factor of satisfaction with the overall experience (Priilaid *et al.*, 2020). Concluding, wine tourists have, on average, higher income levels and have the habitude of drinking wine. This implies higher levels of demand concerning the quality of the wine experiences offered at the destinations and, also, some margin for suppliers who do not have to consider price so heavily since this is not the most relevant dimension for their consumers (Marzo-Navarro and Pedraja-Iglesias, 2009).

As for the wine tourist, they are commonly distinguished between each other applying the segmentation used by Charters and Ali-Knight (2002). With the highest level of interest in the product we have Wine Lovers, who have a vast knowledge on the topic and are continuously searching for opportunities to further learn. They educate themselves by reading books, assisting to wine related tv programmes and wine tastings. They are also interested in gathering knowledge on the gastronomy and the link between food and wine. They visit cellars to taste wines, expand their knowledge and have intentions to buy wine. Within this segment is possible for identify a restrict group named by the authors as Connoisseurs. This exclusive group is further interested in the wine production methods, from grape growing to the wine tasting. They also present higher education and income levels, making them a quiet interesting consumer for wineries to welcome.

The following segment, Wine Interested, get instructed on the topic through wine tastings, and are interested in the winemaking procedure and on how to proper taste a wine. As Wine Lovers, they also visit cellars with intention to buy wine, and unlike the first group, they are not as interested in food and wine links.

The third main segment are entitled as the Wine Novice, they act based on curiosity rather than knowledge. More than the tasting itself, they value winery and vineyard tours the most. They engage in wine tourism activities when having a wine region relatively close to where they live, or in a broader touristic experience. They are unlikely to have wine tourism as primarily motivation for holiday planning. This appears to be a more dynamic segment, since once they satisfy their curiosity, either move towards the Wine Interested segment or they remove themselves from the wine tourism market.

There is a last and least interested wine tourism segment named by the authors as the Hanger On. This is the type of tourism that participates in wine tourism activities with a passive attitude, without any knowledge or interest on the topic. They might be accompanying a group or another someone with further knowledge and interest levels.

Demographically, Lameiras (2015) characterized the wine tourist in Portugal as being predominantly male, with an age range from 26 to 65 years old, married or in a nonmarital partnership, with dependent children, possessing one or more high educational degrees, an average income higher than 1750 euros and to be currently employed. They were also found to be more likely to visit a cellar with friends or co-workers in groups of 3 than with their partner. Children and exclude from these activities in most of the cases.

2.2.1. Wine tourism as economic development in Rural Areas

Several rural areas in the Mediterranean region are currently under economic stress due to the demographic changes that the global economic restructuring and its consequent population and employment shifts provoked (Murray and Kline, 2015). In order to develop a competitive advantage that allows to minimize the harmful consequences of the current situation, rural regions must develop sectors with high indexes of attractiveness and in which is possible to differentiate partially or completely from competitors (Vukovic, 2019). Over the last twenty years researchers have defended that wine tourism has the potential to help rural communities to sustainably boost positive economic impacts without negatively impacting the environmental or social health of the community (Murray and Kline, 2015). A wine tourism strategy applied to a wine region can unwind in economic benefits for individual stakeholders, such as winemakers and wine cellars managers and owners, spillovers for other sectors in the surroundings and consequently regional development. Besides the economic facet of development, socio cultural development is highly valuable by visitors and residents. Touristic

development under this context contrast with mass tourism in the way that, because it uses the natural environment as part of the attractive, and is an activity that creates wealth, it enhances environmental protection (Vukovic, 2019). The wine tourism strategy design should concern seasonality, as it should include measures to distribute visitors throughout the year and not to let them concentrate in the usual holiday season only. Some other economic benefits of wine tourism include an increase on demand for the territory, and for complementary touristic products, the extension of length of stay, an increment on the visitor's expenditure, and an incentive for innovation on the regional tourism offer (Trišić *et al.*, 2019).

A way to organize wine tourism suppliers, and wine tourists, are wine routes. Today, this concept has spread through different geographies. From the visitor's point of view this is a way to contact with wine and culture of a given region, even if in an unknown location (Trišić *et al.*, 2019). From the suppliers' point of view, is a way to join efforts on a touristic product with added value for visitors. This implies cooperation between stakeholders in the co-creation of such routes (Festa *et al.*, 2020; Loureiro *et al.*, 2019). An Italian study concluded that residents, wine tourism operators and visitors have a positive perception of the organization of such routes. Nevertheless, the communication between the responsible for the organization of wine routes and public entities responsible for the territory promotion represent a weakness. This leads to the need for the public entities to understand the benefits of the wine tourism, contributing for its development, either through financial support or territory promotion based on wine (Trišić *et al.*, 2019).

There are some examples of success which were already studied and can be considered good practices cases for other regions facing similar constrains. These projects, due to its proper planning and execution were able to dynamize economically fragile areas. An example of such touristic product was a project named City of Wine. In 2006, Marqués de Riscal, an iconic Spanish winery, diversified its concept, combining design, spa experiences with wine-based therapies, a Michelin-starred restaurant, a conference centre and a museum. These facilities had a positive impact on the valorisation of the regional surroundings, as it became a desirable destination. (Park *et al.*, 2019).

2.3. Contextualization of Region and Product

The present study aims to explore the potential of a regional product in boosting the touristic activity of its region of origin. This section of literature review will present the specific traits of the region and the product in discussion.

Alentejo is one of the seven NUT II regions in which Portugal is divided. Located between the Central Region and Algarve. Is described as “decongested, preserved and safe” by the Comissão de Coordenação e Desenvolvimento Regional do Alentejo. The same entity enhances the excellence of the regional products related with industry, gastronomy, and patrimonial and cultural heritage.

2.3.1. Alentejo's Visitors

Regarding the most important external markets for Alentejo, by level of relevance, is possible to find in the Annual Market Plan for Alentejo 2019 that the most significant portion is represented by the Spanish market. Spain is historically, and remains, the principal source of visitors and this tendency is still growing. The second most important market but losing expression is France. Following, Brazil is the third most relevant source of visitors for the region and is also a growing in importance. Germany, as the fifth most present market, is highly considered for outdoor and niche products market segments. United States of America has been growing rapidly, presenting the most significant growth regarding foreign markets. These visitors privileged high end touristic offer and visit the territory in off peak seasons, contributing to lower the effect of seasonality. Nevertheless, the most recent information in this regard shows a different ranking on the origin of the one million and 600 thousand Alentejo's visitors. The main market is the domestic market, with more than one million visitors in 2019, follow by Spain, Brazil, United States of America and Germany before France (Travel BI, 2020).

Travel BI (2020), a platform created by Turismo de Portugal with the most updated information, also clarifies that half of Alentejo visitors, about 800 thousand, prefer hotel rather than other accommodation options and, more specifically, almost half of these visitors choose 4 stars hotels. The information on the number of visitors staying in rural tourism units, local lodgement units are not available, but these two categories are, by elimination criteria, the option of one third of the total number of visitors.

Regarding other demographic characteristics, the study Characterization of the Touristic Demand - Alentejo (2013) a study was performed to establish a profile of the Alentejo's visitor, which stated that the most common visitors have between 25 to 44 years old, are married or live in nonmarital partnership and possessed a higher education degree. In what concerns the average income level, this was found to be higher among the winter visitors rather than the ones visiting during the summer. The same study stated that the average expenditure per day per person was most of the times below 50 euros and the groups would have maximum 6 individuals. There was also a sign of loyalty discovered since about half the visitors had already visited Alentejo before, more than once. The study also identified the most and least appreciated traits of the territory. As main driver for satisfaction were pointed the beaches, the tranquillity, the landscape, wine tastings and the monuments. On the other hand, the lack of activity diversity and night-time animation, along with the healthcare equipment and the facilities for people with reduced mobility represent the traits the visitors appreciated the least.

2.3.2. Alentejo's Wine Tourism Potentialities

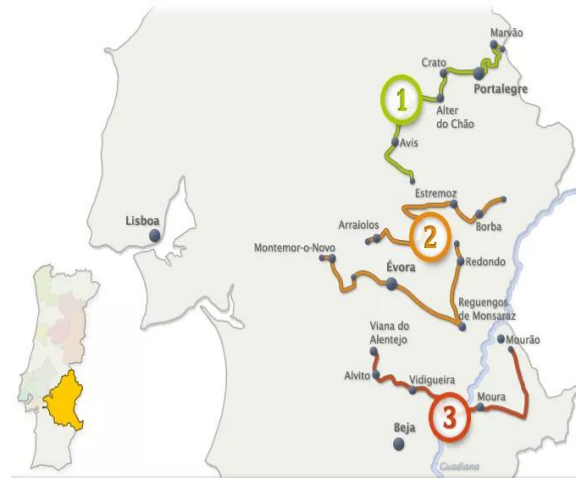
A Conceptual Model for Wine tourism in Alentejo was suggested by Neves and Silva (2011). This model defined 5 major pillars of which the touristic demand depends on and that must be aligned to allow ambitious project to prosper in the region:

1. Core wine product pillar: special features of Alentejo as a wine tourism destination such as: wineries, cellars and support facilities; the range of wine related activities and events; quality of accommodation with regional character and themes linked to wine; wine and wine related products specialized shops; winery staff training, and available information about wine tourism supply.
2. Core Destination Appeal pillar refers to the physical aspects that constitute touristic attractions of Alentejo's as a destination: landscape, monuments, accessibility, as well as other tourism products or services that offer the possibility of additional tourist enjoyment within the destination.
3. Branding and marketing are fundamental for the purpose of increase the visibility of the destination through an effective differentiation based on what Alentejo has that cannot be found in other wine regions in Portugal.

4. Governance plays a central role in the regional development of Alentejo, especially in the moderation of the interests of each player concerning the sustainability of the industry and ensuring its healthy growth.
5. Touristic demand is central and cannot be overlooked. It matters to understand not only the motivations that lead wine tourists to the region but also how other traits of Alentejo stimulate this interest.

Some initiatives for wine tourism dynamization have already taken place in Alentejo and other Portuguese wine regions. The most well-known is Rotas do Vinho. These thematic routes are an innovative touristic product that allows diversification of supply and a way of promoting the places involved in their path (Costa and Kastenholtz, 2009). They consist in signalized paths, organized in networks, with the purpose to divulgate the regional products of local productive units with visitation facilities (Novais and Antunes, 2009). The objectives of the creation of wine routes are the development of tourism potential of different regions in the specific areas of culture, history, tradition, heritage and landscape. They contribute to the preservation of the authenticity of each region through the dissemination of its handicrafts, landscape heritage, architecture, museology and gastronomy, in reaction to desertification and the economic constraints felt in some rural areas (Costa and Kastenholtz, 2009). In fact, collaboration between destination management organizations, wine and tourism sector entrepreneurs and cultural and patrimonial heritage suppliers is key to offer an integrated wine experience product (Getz and Brown, 2006). This approach represents added value for visitors and suppliers. Wine routes can be a privileged tool to create a closer relationship with visitors, allowing the collection of data and feedback for future marketing strategies (Getz, 2000). Furthermore, these initiatives allow companies to increase sales volume, engage consumers, test new products and market segments (Costa and Kastenholtz, 2009). The region itself also benefits from the proper implementation of such initiatives as it diversifies the touristic offer available, attracts visitors to the territory, increases the length of stay and average expenditure per visitor, improves the image of the destination and makes it appealing for investors, stimulating economic development (Costa and Kastenholtz, 2009).

Figure 4 Rotas dos Vinho - Alentejo



Source: retrieved from <https://www.clubevinhosportugueses.pt/vinhos/regioes/alentejo/rotas-dos-vinhos-alentejo/> visited on 17/06/2020

In the Alentejo region there are 3 established wine routes: S. Mamede Route, Guadiana Route and Historic Route (Costa and Kastenzholz, 2009) as shown in Figure 3. Alentejo's Wine Routes are the third most visited wine routes in the country, following Porto and Bairrada wine routes (Lameiras, 2015). The Alentejo's Wine Route is an entity with a positive impact in wineries and wine tourism companies' development due to its role as regulator, imposing informal conduct norms and official plans and agreements. Their role is also to provide stability and homogeneity to the sector (Lavandoski, 2015). Despite the effort to standardize the development models, to be applied by companies, made by official institutions, the same author concludes each company diversifies its strategy depending on its organizational characteristics. Heterogeneity on the strategies applied must be in line with the legal framework established by Alentejo's Wine Route in order to gain its endorsement. This framework is formally defined as Guide for Best Practices in Wine Routes (2011). Based on the European letter for wine tourism, the development of such activity must be anchored to 3 principles: sustainable development, cooperation and to preserve the environment where it takes place. Considering those, a set of 4 goals were established, the valorisation of wine culture, regional socio-economic development, life quality improvement of residents and to control touristic flows and continuously improvement of offer quality. Wineries also learn with each other, as successfully implemented strategies might be replicated by others in the future, whenever applicable (Lavandoski, 2016).

Along with the positive effect institutions such as the Wine Route have in wine tourism development, Lavandoski (2016) also validated that Alentejo wineries possess dynamic

capabilities, namely, sensing, learning, integrating, coordinating and reconfiguring skills. These allow them to identify opportunities, assimilate knowledge, integrate wine tourism activities in the existing routines and allocate resources to the proper development of wine tourism within the winery itself.

Despite the advantages the region could benefit from having this organized and integrated touristic product, most of the routes present managerial deficiencies which jeopardizes its consolidation. The lack of coordination of the responsible authorities and the non-existence of clear regulation are pointed out as the primarily problem in this regard. The Alentejo's Wine Route regulation may produce two contradictory effects. It incentives wineries to adhere to wine tourism good practices imposing legal requirements and developing the sector as a whole, but at the same time, it can be seen as an inhibitor for innovation and differentiation of the wineries if the regulation do not present enough flexibility (Lavandoski, 2015). The cellars themselves present some deficiencies in the adaptation for the touristic activity such as the lack of language and other public attendance skills and lack of visitation and tastings facilities. The majority of those routes are *a la carte* tours and depend on the availability of the cellars, which do not always have consistent operating hours. Coordination is also problematic between entrepreneurs of the sector and results in the impossibility of integrated touristic offers. (Novais and Antunes, 2009). The development of the wine tourism sector also relies on the support of other stakeholders, namely the visitors and the resident population (Lavandoski, 2015).

Despite the fragilities presented, other assets can be source of tourist development. The landscapes, and other natural features, are huge assets that can place Alentejo in the front line in what concerns eco-friendly, culture and wine tourism in Portugal. The most traditional wine growing techniques are considered environmentally sustainable, meaning Alentejo is suitable to earn eco credentials (Radke *et al.*, 2015) In the same document, we can find that, in terms of water spent in agriculture in Alentejo, the wine industry appears to have a lower environmental impact than other cultures. Nevertheless, it occupies only 6% of the agricultural land, meaning that an increase in wine production is considered a responsible agriculture practice. Despite the benefits presented, wine industry is not completely "green" as the usage of pesticides seems to be increasing rather than diminish. If there is a real interest in assuming a position as an eco-friendly destination, Alentejo should accommodate more responsible wine making practices. Still related with wine tourism only, the report's authors pointed out some practices for the improvement of the territory as a wine destination, such as the creation of an App capable of

guide and counsel the visitors and investment on signage, on roads, to emphasize the locals of interest regarding gastronomy and traditions within the wine experience. The Alqueva region is mostly searched for its gastronomy and wine tourism offer. Along with cultural tourism, handcrafts and the rural environment, these are the main attractions of the region. Despite the potential for other tourism practices, such as nature tourism, nautical and outdoor activities, these do not appear as interesting as the previously mentioned ones (Dias-Sardinha and Ross, 2014).

2.3.3. Talha wine

Talha wine is the central product of the present study. The following segments aim to contextualize this product in history and popular culture. It is a regional product from Alentejo, as this is currently the only region worldwide legally entitled to use Vinho de Talha expression on wine bottles. The peculiarities of the wine make it eligible to be a niche market product (Falcão, 2016). Another aspect of interest regarding the product relies is the recent application to be recognized as Intangible Cultural Heritage by UNESCO. The application does not concern the wine itself, but the technique used, which dates from the Romans age, around 2000 year ago, and has been preserved in Alentejo only.

Historically, amphora wine appeared in Georgia, a region known for being the birthplace of wine, with archaeological evidence of its production dated since 6 000 b.c. Despite the great evolution on winemaking since the roman age, nowadays Georgia' producers find their competitive advantage in the ancestral tradition of Amphora wines. The equipment needed to make Amphora wine is named "Qvevri", an amphora made of clay, that should be buried below the ground level and full of whole trampled bunches of grapes. The grapes, seeds and stems are fermented together in this condition for a period that differs accordingly to the wine type. Red wine ferment for one month and the white wines ferment for several months. After fermentation, the amphoras are closed with stone or glass covers and hermetically sealed with clay until the spring season. Once the amphora is opened, the wine can either be consumed immediately or moved to another amphora for further ageing. This process is explained by Lisa Granik in *Revista dos Vinhos*. The technique used in Georgia is already classified as Intangible Culture Heritage by UNESCO since 2013.

Some areas started to produce this wine for its market potential as pointed out by Falcão (2016), namely Friuli and Sicily, both Italian wine regions. But following the historical background of this production practice, another area emerges as primordial: Alentejo. In Portugal, the start of

wine culture is attributed to the romans. Archaeology allows to identify some major production point of wine in amphoras in Alentejo and Algarve, in Beja, Évora and Faro. Further research also identified small production units, probably used for domestic consumption, nevertheless, it is not possible to evaluate the economic value of this diffuse productions (Loureiro, 2016).

According to Alentejo's traditional procedure, after the grapes arrive to the cellar, they go through the "Ripanço", the process of removing the woody part of the bunch of grapes. This can be done by hand, or, more commonly today, by electric strippers. A part, or the total, of the separate part will be introduced together with the grapes in the amphora for airing and filtering purposes. Nowadays, after the crushing of the grapes, a small portion of sulphur dioxide is added to the must, to enable bottling and a long-lasting wine. Once inside the amphora, the content must be mixed regularly, more than once per day, to avoid that the solid part covers the opening leading to the bursting of the vessel. The fermentation process takes place in caves to ensure low temperatures. Some additional measures, like involving the amphoras in wet carpets, can aid to lower the temperature of the mixture. The fermentation lasts from 8 to 15 days. Afterwards, the producer must wait that the solid part sinks to the bottom, this can take a few more weeks. The solid part will filter the wine when the amphora is opened. At the time of the opening of the vessel, the wine can be drunk directly from it, transferred to another amphora, or to be bottled and sold throughout the year. To preserve the wine that will be bottled in the year after from oxidation, some producers use wooden or clay covers or simply one centimetre of olive oil on top to close the amphora (Comissão Vitivinícola Regional do Alentejo, 2016).

The spaces where this wine is traditionally consumed is also part of the overall experience. To be fully understood, Talha wine must be consumed in Tabernas, the typical Alentejo's taverns, which have usually their own amphoras for production and serve the guest directly from them or the guests can serve themselves. The place also serves typical finger food and meals. The environment is characterized by its friendly atmosphere and the Cante Alentejano naturally emerges in between the conversations (Loureiro, 2016). Considering the four realms of an experience model by Pine and Gilmore (1998), drinking Talha wine in a typical tavern, with all the elements of its ambiance can be considered an escapist experience, since it requires active participation from the guest and constitutes an immersive environment.

3. Methodology

Noor (2008) divided research in two methodological approaches: Positivism and Post positivism. Positivism appears as the application of the natural sciences method to social research. Is based on the collection of objective data and the posterior establishment of causality relationships (Finch, 1988), is therefore strongly connected with qualitative analysis (Noor, 2008). The second approach, Post Positivism, the data collection does not imply the gathering of objective facts. The objective is to draw insights from perceptions that people have upon their experience regarding a social constructed reality (Easterby-Smith *et al.*, 1991), so it is usually approached with a qualitative analysis (Noor, 2008).

The problematic depicted in the present dissertation is strongly connected to tradition and history. The product analysed is connected with family productions and contributes greatly to the identity of the territory. The research intends to understand how stakeholders face the current situation and what they expect for the future. This logic led to the conclusion that a qualitative research approach was necessary to address this question.

Being the first step the proper defining of the question under analyse. This allowed the design of an appropriate methodology, ensuring the most relevant sources were mobilized and the value of the emerged insights. The present research aims to clarify if Talha wine can be a differentiation factor of the wine touristic offer of Alentejo. To do so, the empirical research will attempt to address the issue in two phases (1) what is the role of Talha wine in the wine tourism panorama today and (2) what are the expectations from stakeholders for the future of Talha wine regarding its touristic potential.

To extract valuable information, regarding the main topic under analysis in the present dissertation, there was an effort to present Talha wine, as well as the wine tourism initiatives already in place in the territory. This contextualization allowed to identify some gaps in literature which were key to the development of the following research. To be able to add value to the available information, an exploratory approach was chosen. The study conducted was based on interviews with producers, touristic operators, public entities, and municipal councils.

The usage of both secondary and primary data was considered necessary to establish the point where the wine tourism and Talha wine are at the present, and to understand what direction these thematic are taking for the future.

3.1. Primary and Secondary data

Secondary data was collected from literature, and it is divided in two main bodies. The first one, the literature review, aimed to present fundamental concepts, sequential studies and conclusions that led to the idea of economic development in rural areas through tourism modalities such as wine tourism. This part was fundamental to the understanding of the context in which the particular case of Talha wine and Alentejo would be analysed further on. These bases gave a perspective from broader concepts and general knowledge on the topic of tourism led economic development to the specific case of wine tourism in Alentejo. The second part to be developed, consist in the contextualization of Alentejo as a space for touristic products consumption, the current state of wine tourism in the region and, lastly, to present Talha wine, its traditional roots and why there is an increasing interest in it.

Following this secondary data analyse, an empirical research takes place to understand how the different stakeholders perceive this situation and what they prospect for the future. Facing an exploratory study regarding personal experiences the decision of adopting a qualitative data approach and not quantitative was clear.

Primary data was collected through the conduction of interviews. According to Richey and Klein (2014) the most appropriate way to evaluate a product is by applying methodologies such as interviews, case-studies and document analyses. Interviews vary in style according to the level of structure (Wilson, 2012). A strict set of questions will result in a structured interview style with no margin to adapt to the respondent. A semi structured will allow the interviewer to follow up on interesting topics that may appear during the conversation without losing the purpose of the interview. The last and more relaxed modality, an unstructured interview is a conversation with loose guidelines and can be totally adapted to the conversation course. The interview type adopted by the present study was a semi-structured interview. All the questions regarded the opinion and observation of the respondents on each topic addressed, so it was not an option to perform a close ended questionnaire. And despite the liberty given to let subjects to emerge naturally, there was a set of several topics defined as fundamental to be tackled during the conversation, so it had to have an adaptive structure.

3.2. Interview process

3.2.1. Sample

The interviewees selection considered the cultural and patrimonial facet of the product. For that, it is an object of interest for many other entities besides producers and consumers. This product is currently in the application process to be recognized by UNESCO as Intangible Cultural Heritage, and with this goal in mind, different stakeholders are cooperating. The ones who signed the application were the first ones to be selected for the study. These included 22 municipalities and 7 other institutions such as the Entidade Regional do Turismo do Alentejo e Ribatejo, the Direção Regional de Cultura do Alentejo, the Comissão Regional Vitivinícola do Alentejo, among others. Once this project did not include the wine producers, but they were considered stakeholders of interest in the matter, they were also considered for the study. During the process, other names emerged and interesting regarding the topic, such as University Professors who had previously studied the subject. Additionally, all the respondents were asked to kindly refer another person of interest, allowing the establishment of a network of valuable contacts for the optimization of the study's relevance.

All the organizations and individual personalities identified as interesting for the study were contacted. The first approach was made through e-mail, presenting the thesis author in her quality of ISCTE Business School master student and the thesis thematic. Following this brief introduction, there was a paragraph explaining why the person or organization was selected to participate and lastly, it was presented a time frame for the interview to be scheduled accordingly to the respondent's availability.

Due to the pandemic outbreak, all interviews were performed via telephone and the calls were recorded with the accordance of the respondents for transcription purposes.

3.2.2. Interview Construction

Since the sample was composed by experts from different areas, with different backgrounds and developing their professional activities in several contexts, there was the need to make different sets of questions to address during interviews. For consistency purposes the respondents were divided in two main groups, Productive Enterprises and Public Entities / Non-Productive Enterprises. A set of questions was prepared for each group considering the aforementioned conditions. Once data on both the wine tourism sector and Talha wine were

already collected, the script elaborated for the interviews conduction aimed to close the gap on the available information related with the touristic potential of Talha wine in particular. These scripts contained 9 and 8 questions, respectively. Besides the topic related questions, some demographic information regarding the respondents was collected, in the form of demographic questionnaire. The questions regarded the age and gender of the respondents, the educational qualifications they possessed, the municipality where they live, their position in the organization and if anonymity was required. Regarding the main set of questions of the interview, they were similar in structure, as they touch similar topics, but throw different scopes.

The first question was always an ice breaking question, made primarily for the respondent comfort and to allow them to talk about something of their expertise. For Productive Enterprises, this question was: "What distinguishes a wine in the market today?" As for Public Entities / Non-Productive Enterprises, the first question would be: "What distinguishes Alentejo as a wine tourism destination?"

The second question already included the perception the respondent has on the product itself. For Productive Enterprises, this question was: "In what aspect is the Talha wine innovative compared to what is available in the market already?" and for the Public Entities / Non-Productive Enterprises, the question would be: "In what aspects does Talha wine contributes for the wine tourism offer of the region?"

The third question regarded the characterization of the consumers of Talha wine and the visitors of Alentejo. The objective of this question was to gather demographic information as well as consumer behaviour and, if possible, to establish profiles. For Productive Enterprises, this question was: "Who are Talha wine's consumers?" As for Public Entities / Non-Productive Enterprises, the focus was the visitors: "How are Alentejo's visitors?" The question was often followed up with questions such as, "What activities do they engage in?" "With whom are they travelling with?" and "To what age ranges or nationalities are they associated with?" These questions were not on the original script, but they were necessary in many interviews to gather as much possible information to establish a pattern, if there would be one.

The fourth questions, still regarding consumers and visitors, inquired if they had any previous knowledge about Talha wine before contacting with the company or visiting the region, respectively. In the case of Productive Enterprises, this question was: "Were your consumers already familiar with the product before they contacted with you, or you still have to present it

to them?" As for Public Entities / Non-Productive Enterprises, the question was different: "Did the visitors had any previous knowledge on the product before visiting Alentejo?"

The next question regarded the communication strategy applied. This question was very direct and aim to leave room for each respondent to explore the most relevant aspect of its own communication techniques and channels. For Productive Enterprises, this question was: "What communication style do you use with your clients?" As for Public Entities / Non-Productive Enterprises, the question would be: "How does your entity communicates Talha wine?"

The sixth question changed the topic for the current UNESCO Intangible Cultural Heritage application. In these regard two subsequent questions were made and were the same for both groups. The first one inquired about the expected advantages of such distinction: "With regard to UNESCO's application for Intangible Cultural, what advantages do you expect to result from this distinction?" The goal was to obtain a reflection of the impact of such distinction in the product and the region where it is produced. The second one inquired about the level of involvement of the different organizations: "Facing this common goal, how do you characterize the level of involvement of stakeholders, public or private?"

For the Productive Enterprises, the eight question regarded the relation between Talha wine and the wine tourism of Alentejo: "Alentejo is recognized as a wine tourism destination. What is the contribution of Talha wine in its differentiation from competing destinations?" For this group, the relation between both subjects had not be directly established earlier.

The last question concerned the expectations each respondent has about the future of the product and the touristic activity in the region: "How do you imagine the touristic offer in the Alentejo in the future and what will be the role of Talha wine in this scenario?" This question was equal for both groups.

3.3. Interview Analysis

Interviews took place in March and April of 2020, until the saturation point was reach. Meaning, every respondent was able to add useful information for the study, but the last few respondents' answers were simply validating was had been said before. After all interviews were conducted, the recordings were transcribed to allow further analyse. The transcribing was processed with the support of speech to text online tools, namely the Web Speech API Demonstration. This

tool allowed the investigator to dictate the interview content to a microphone and the online software would transcribe it. Despite the large margin of error, this was a time saving process. It also allowed the investigator to go through each interview, for correction purposes, several times before formal analysis, this way gaining a wider notion of the material collected.

Once all the interviews were transcribed and corrected, the texts were coded. For coding, the investigator performed two analysis, an automatic one and a manual one. To aid in this process, Atlas.ti was the selected software. This allowed to organize the codes in tree shape, creating wider categories of topics approached and subcategories with what had been mentioned in their regard. The coding process created organized quotes by grouping them accordingly to the theme of each code. This allowed to have an overview of what had been said about each research topic, this way understanding what the general opinion regarding this same topic was. It also facilitates the observation of conflicting perspectives and the arguments presented by each party. The insights resulting from the interview analysis are organized in the same logic as the tree codes are outlined. Each main category of topics will be analysed concerning what has been said about it and about each subcategory connected to it.

4. Results

The aim of the empirical research is to provide relevant insight to fulfil the purpose of the research. The present study focus is to understand the role of Talha wine in the wine tourism panorama. Since the interviews included public entities and producers, the results concern the perception of the supply side of the market.

4.1. Profile of the respondents

In total 26 interviews were performed, 14 with Productive Enterprises and 12 with Public Entities / Non-productive Enterprises. The full demographic questionnaires and the respective given answers can be found in Appendix 1. When analysed as a whole, the respondents show a highly educated profile, as all of them presented at least a bachelor's degree. The average age of the respondents was 45 years old and most of them reside in the Alentejo region, being Vidigueira the municipality with higher percentage of respondents and, simultaneously, the municipality with higher number of producers.

When analysed separately, is possible to find differences between the two groups. As for the Productive Enterprises, where all the respondents are Talha wine producers or work in companies with Talha wine production, the average age is 38 years old and half of them reside in Alentejo but scattered throughout the region. This shows a tendency for a renovation on the workforce applied to this product. This is particular important since the responsible entities for the Talha wine UNESCO Intangible Culture Heritage application, must prove that the product has the conditions to be preserved, so it is relevant that younger people show interest in continuing this process. The other half of the respondents in this group reside outside of Alentejo, mostly in Great Lisbon area. This data also shows the attractiveness of Talha wine in bringing young talent to the region. The respondents from Public Entities / Non-Productive Enterprises present a higher age average, 51 years old, and all, except one, live in Alentejo, mostly in Vidigueira.

4.2. Interviews Results

Based on the interview questions, seven main discussion topics emerged: Alentejo, Touristic Offer, Talha wine, Talha wine consumers, Communication, UNESCO Application and

Perceptions for the Future. These topics can be further divided in subtopics, open for discussion with each of the respondents depending on the conversation line.

4.2.1. Alentejo

For the first main topic, Alentejo, the subcategories analysed were Historical and Geographic Context, Awards, Differential Aspects of Wine, Terroir and Grape Varieties, Alentejo's Visitors, Region's Characteristics and Producers.

Regarding the Historical and Geographical Context, the respondents shared some information about the geographical areas where Talha wine is most typical of, enhancing the region of Vidigueira and Cuba, more specifically in the villages of Vila de Frades and Vila Alva. Until today, these are the regions where the density of producers is the highest. Still regarding important geographies for the Talha wine process, another location mentioned was the village of São Pedro do Corval, in Reguengos de Monsaraz, where potteries operate until today. This activity originated the huge Talhas, or amphoras, in which the wine is made and are therefore, key for the Talha wine process.

The historical background of Talha wine, was targeted by a study in the XIX, mentioned by Interviewee #13, which found that from all the "... producers of Beja, only one would produce in wooden recipients, all the others would produce in clay recipients, meaning, all the others would make Talha wine." More recently, this technique was widely obsolete by the new technologies used in agriculture for the past 50 years. As so, it was close to disappear in the last decades of the past century. Despite this scenario, the tradition was kept in the most typical villages, and about 30 years ago, a group of interested people decided to invest in this old technique, allowing it to survive. More than historical facts, the cultural importance of this type of wine was also mentioned, as it accompanied the daily life of the people. In the words of Interviewee #22 "the evolution of society, has passed much through the centuries, by meetings around Talhas and Talha wine. People would sit down and discuss a little what the village's issues were, and make decisions around them."

The most outstanding Characteristics of the Region relevant for tourism sector enhanced by the respondents are the calming and relaxing features transmitted by the natural and unmodified landscapes, the low urbanization, the silence provided by the low level of traffic and confusion, as summarized by Interviewee #2 "Alentejo, by its differentiation, is one of the least urban

regions of Europe. All Alentejo, from the interior to the littoral, has a unique landscape and all the calm of this region”

Regarding the characteristics conducive to the practice of wine tourism, Interviewee #26 stands out the “strong representation in terms of number of producers and production area. Then, the productions’ diversity and the associated edaphoclimatic characteristics of the territory.” Making Alentejo one of the main wine regions in Portugal.

Historical regional products, such as Talha wine or Cante Alentejino, also appear as important features, once a considerable part of the touristic offer is linked with patrimonial and cultural aspects of Alentejo. As some of these cultural touristic offers involve integration with the locals and their everyday activities, it matters to mention the proximity created between the visitor and the community, which is a “very positive element for the relationship between the visitor and the visited”, in the opinion of Interviewee #25.

About the role played by wine in the local economy, in the words of Interviewee #1: “Well, the wine, the vineyard, the production and all the correlated things are fundamental in the economy of the region. And it is very clear for the touristic promotion, the wine is fundamental for Alentejo in economic terms.” As the touristic activity is growing in these territories, in volume and in number, in the past years, wine tourism is considered to be in development. This phenomenon is based on “truly unique lodgement alternatives and wine experiences” as described by Interviewee #24.

Considering the broad diversity offered by the wine market today, the respondents, particularly the ones representing productive companies, shared their opinions in which are the Differential Aspects of Wine today. Consumer trust on the brand is highly relevant for the buying decision. A previous client is more likely to purchase a wine, even an unknown one, than a client without previous contact with the brand, this result corroborates the results already found in literature (Loureiro and Cunha, 2017).

Also, the image and the label appear as one of the most used tools to attract customer. Image can be used not only to attract clients in general, but to communicate directly with the target segments the company is most interested in, as explained by Interviewee #14, “We send a very well targeted message for the people to whom we wish to reach out. We explain very well which is the added value of each wine.” Still about how important image is for these company strategies, Interviewee #14 adds “to give the feeling to everyone who buys our wine, that they

are taking home more than what they paid for the product.” Along with image, clients also appear to be quite price sensitive in this industry, as justified by Interviewee #11 “Today, facing all these crises, people are much more aware for the cheaper wine.” Stories are also highly mentioned by the respondents. Wines today must have a story attached to it to connect deeper with the customers. The human factor behind the bottle of wine can be decisive, and as so, to be able to tell an authentic story can also be a strategy to reach for interested clients. As explained by Interviewee #9 “... the selling of the wine, is also based on stories. Stories that are clear, consistent and true.”

Besides the marketing strategies applied to the industry, companies are also focusing on the intrinsic characteristics of the products to have them well accepted by the public. The most used words regarding this topic were authenticity and origin. For many, to differentiate itself from other wines, the product must reflect the region or sub region where it was made. Today with the technology associated with wine production, producers such as Interviewee #15, stand out the importance of the origin of the wine, “... we also look for a greater authenticity, the original grape varieties of each region, the reflection of the wines' terroir.” This allows to differentiate wines from each producer through oenology, enhancing the terroir where the wine was conceived. Along with the usage of local grapes varieties, also the process can be used as a differential factor. As today, in the words of Interviewee #19 “People look for different things, things made in a different way, wines that are special. I think that is it. It must have something different, either in the production method or when we taste the wine, to provoke different sensations.”

Terroir and Grape Varieties are unavoidable when the theme is Alentejo. It is one of the most used differential factors. The edaphoclimatic characteristics, specified by Interviewee #23 “Which allow the soils to have a humidity concentration and breathing capacity that, for culture of vines, are ideal and unique.” This produces native grape varieties that, in the opinion of most respondents, should be used not only to distinguish regional wines from each other, but also to distinguish Portuguese wines in the international market. The advantage from this practice are synthesized by Interviewee #17: “If Portugal bets on this strategy of unique varieties that we have, most likely, our success will take longer to arrive, but when it does, it will be... Let's say, evident.”

Both Alentejo's wines and Alentejo as a wine tourism destination have been highly praised by the critic. Such Awards are highly significant for winemakers as they automatically raise the

level of consideration for their wines in the consumer minds. This was testified in the first person and described by Interviewee #7, "Parker points are very important, and the tasting judge attributed 95 points. This positioned my wine right away in a great visibility and interest level." When it came to distinguish Alentejo as wine tourism destination. The visibility gave to the region through the attribution of awards can explain the popularity among international visitors. These awards are international, with higher expression in the United States, what can be the reason why North America is one of the raising markets for wine tourism in Alentejo.

The Producers are another highly discussed theme, as they play a major role in the wine business, as well in the wine tourism activity of the region, and even in the continuity of this technique. As mentioned, Talha wine producers are proliferating across the Alentejo territory, but with higher expression in Vidigueira. Is possible to divide these producers in categories regarding their dimension and the finality they have for their productions.

As this kind of winemaking was kept by some families who, until these days, produce their wine at home, the first category, are the family cellars. This kind of production is meant to be consumed only in the family and give away as gifts to other friends and family. Also, gatherings, with typical food, are often organized around the opening of the amphoras time, to taste and drink the new wine among family and friends. Some restaurants, specially taverns, also produce this wine as the house wine. The wine from these productions is not bottled, it must be drunk from the amphora directly and is a seasonal product, as it does not have any preservatives added to it.

The second category of producers are the ones who produce with intend to sell. These producers have a higher production capacity and if applicable, can be considered DOC producers. This wine is bottled and sold through the usual channels as any other wine. It can be available in supermarkets, wineries, or restaurants, in both the national and international markets. Some of these winemakers use only this technique and some others use it to diversify their portfolio. For major players in Alentejo's wine industry, is common to found a production line dedicated to this wine, but usually it represents a very small percentage of the total production for these kind of companies, sometimes 1 percent, or even less. As a traditional product, Talha wine had period when its process was almost lost, as winemakers would not show interest in it. Despite this lack of interest of the previous generation, today a considerable number of producers interviewed were under 40 years old and new project and cellars keep appearing, with some

producing for only a short period of time. The new generation of Talha wine producers proves that the testimony of this techniques is fully passed.

To boost the enthusiasm and the communication of Talha wine, in the internal and external markets, this product is included in many events, promoted by public and private stakeholders. Among the producers, a particular event stands out, the Amphora Wine Day promoted by Herdade Do Rocim. This event includes different producers of Talha wine from Alentejo, from other part of the national territory and some foreign producers of the so called, Terracotta wines.

The producers are also linked with a concern for the future, regarding the evolution of the Talha wine market. As most of the producers expressed their concern with the fact that other producers do not follow the traditional process. And therefore, they fear an abusive usage of the word Talha in wine bottles containing altered Talha wine, which will be discussed further on.

When asked about Alentejo's Visitors profiles in the territory, several categories emerged. In terms of visitors with intentions to engage with leisure activities, which is the category with highest expression, wine tourists represent a growing segment. According to Interviewee #14, "...more visitors come to the region to experience the Alentejo's wine touristic offer." These is a highly desired target segment for wine producers, as they tend to have a higher power of acquisition and to be culturally differentiated. As so, they will value the authenticity of the regional products and demand for higher quality touristic products. But even these wine-interested visitors have other dimensions available at the destination. Facets such as the rural landscape, the quietness, the identity patrimony and culture are valuable for visitors with more access to information, with higher levels of income and who look for personalized experiences, related with identity products rather than standardized tourism products.

When asked about if visitors would usually come with family, in couples, with friends, in excursions or even as solo travellers, respondents claim to have programs for all king of travel segments, as stated by Interviewee #24, "attractive programmes to participate in family, with friends. Or simply alone. We have cases of people who came alone, who came to discover." Small groups of family or friends are related to unplanned trips throughout the territory and often ask in the tourism information points regarding attractions in each town. Larger groups can be divided in two segments, school and senior universities excursions and agency programmed excursions. These last ones are also divided in two groups by Interviewee #13 as "... one of them are the travel agencies which make routes of very few days and look for the

cheap things.” And the other ones, focus on quality, where “... the price is not the most important thing.”

Regarding the interest of these visitors in Talha wine, is described as a growing process as well. As the product communication reaches the public, some producers assume to be searched by visitors drawn by the curiosity in this particular product and the events dedicated to it. These events occasionally attract other amphora wine producers, from different geographies, who visit Alentejo to be in touch with this particular technique. Interviewee #23 mentioned that visitors do not all have leisure purposes, but also academic ones: “It’s also a population of students and investigators who visits us to find out more regarding this production method and, inclusively, focus their education in this topic.”

Summarizing this first category, is possible to identify some key points of discussion. Historically, Talha wine as a motor of development for several related sectors, such as pottery, restoration, besides its low weight in the total of wine production. Once made obsolete by modern winemaking techniques, the tradition was recovered by a restrict number of producers. Despite the loss in economic value for the region, it was always a trait of local culture. As for the surroundings, Alentejo has a convenient scenario for tourism activates related with relaxation and nature. Given the importance of wine production in the economy, wine tourism is a sector that can be further explored and Alentejo present the ideal conditions for its development. Patrimony and culture are also important sources for touristic offer, since the region possesses a vast variety of traditional products which enable co-creation experiences and active participation of visitor in the daily routines of residents. This also enhances cultural exchange and positive externalities for the territory.

By gathering favourable conditions to the development of high-quality wine tourism, Alentejo has been awarded as a destination. Also, the good performance of several wines in wine contests, also brings attention to the territory where they are made. These awards contribute for the good image of Alentejo, positioning it in the minds of potential visitors. It is believed that a connection between where the awards are conquered and a rise in the respective external market in term of visitation to the destination. Alentejo attracts all king of segments, from families to solo travellers, small group of friends to organized excursions. In terms of expenditure, is also possible to find products for a wide diversity of prices. Regarding in what they look for while at the territory, the main motivation for visiting are the patrimony and cultural offer and wine tourism offer. The most informed tourists or the ones with special

interest in wine represent a valuable segment since they tend to expend more and demand for higher quality experiences. Since Talha wine can be perceived as part of the local culture as well as part of the wine tourism offer, there is a growing tendency in visitors looking for it. Not only from a leisure perspective but as well by investigators and academic who wish to study it.

Regarding the wine market, was possible to define some trends among Alentejo's producers. One widely used strategy applied by the interviewed producers when distinguished their wines in the market is to reflect the terroir under which the wine is produced. Since it is important to enhance the region and sub region of origin of the wines, to communicate the territory by telling engaging stories became part of the marketing strategy of winemakers. To distinguish the wine based on regional terroir traits can, not only, distinguish the region nationwide, but also leverage the Portuguese wine brand in international markets. Particularly, for Talha wine producers, was possible to identify different types, as some households produce Talha wine in very reduced quantities for self-consumption. At this production level the wine is not bottled or sold. This kind of production is disappearing, as in some municipalities there are not a single producer of this type anymore. Wider companies, with greater capacities can bottle and commercialize the wine. These producers can either produce exclusively Talha wine or, in the case of major players in Alentejo, might have Talha wine to diversify its portfolio. Unlike the other production modality, this is a growing phenomenon. This kind of cellars are appearing dispersed through Alentejo and well-established companies are communicating more their productions of Talha wine, participating and promoting events and wine fairs for the purpose.

4.2.2. Touristic Offer

The second main dimension to be analysed is the Touristic Offer available in the region. Regarding this topic, the most current subjects were Wine tourism, Patrimony and Culture, Gastronomy, Accommodation, Other Touristic Products and Negative Points of Touristic Offer.

Considering the high importance of wine in the economy of the region, the usage of this product as theme for the tourist activity came as a natural step. Alentejo is perceived as being one of the first regions to offer wine-based tourism activities. Today Wine tourism is, in the opinion of Interviewee #24, "... in full swing, exploring its incredible potential and presenting truly unique lodgement alternatives and wine experiences." The high quality of the wine touristic offer in Alentejo is consensual among the respondents and most of them were able to name some good practice examples.

Producers understand the benefits of adapting their cellars for visitation and even to perform some activities such as wine tastings, tours explaining the winemaking process and through the vineyards, small thematic courses among other experiences. This also allows direct sell, which is particularly important for small producers. The existence of numerous producers with cellars of different dimensions also contributes for the great variety of wine experiences. Presently, these experiences are not simple tastings and explanatory, the visitor today wishes “to experience what is the day-to-day of people in Vidigueira. Not only see, but also engage in the processes” in the words of Interviewee #10, regarding the specific case of Vidigueira. Interviewee #1 identify two forms of wine tourism, “... the difference is the wine tourism connected to big producers, big cellars, private or cooperative, and the resurgence in some places, of the traditional wine production in Alentejo.”

A number of respondents consider wine tourism as a form of experience tourism, with a specific target. These tourists are perceived as more demanding in terms of quality of the accommodation options and wine related activities. They are also connected with higher income level and higher cultural background. Wine tourists usually are interested in visiting more than one cellar. In this sense the Alentejo Wine Route is often mentioned as the most practical tool to gather these producers and offer to the wine tourist an aggregated offer with different options available. Regarding this initiative, the opinions diverge. For some, the Alentejo Wine Route is up to date, and provides useful insights to visitors, including “the visitor can create his own route and download it to Maps and then go through the region and visit several producers”, as mentioned by Interviewee #19. The same interviewee adds: “They do an excellent job, they even have a new space in Évora's city centre which is quite interactive. It has a lot of information regarding all producers, they make wine tastings from the various producers, advise visitors and book visits directly with us.” On the other hand, in the opinion of Interviewee #13, “It is signed in the field, but at this moment there are many more wine production units which are possible to visit.”

Currently, the wine tourism is focused on exploring the industrial wine production, but recently the interest in activities related with the wine production of Talha wine is growing. Talha wine is one of the production methods that comes to diversify this offer, despite of having very little expression in the total wine production in Alentejo. As mentioned, apart from the initial motivation of visitors, they can always find others touristic dimensions in the region. In the

opinion of Interviewee #25, "... wine tourism is an important asset for the territory, it functions by itself and in complementarity in a harmonic way with other endogenous recourses..."

The second subcategory of touristic offer mentioned more often by the respondents is Patrimony and Culture. The cultural experience associated with Talha wine includes "From Cante Alentejano, to being in the cellar eating traditional snacks, eating and hearing the wine running to the bowl", in the words of Interviewee #12. Cante Alentejano is a cultural trait which has already been classified as UNESCO Intangible Culture Heritage. Cante is also strongly linked to Talha wine as they are connected to the same physical place, named Taberna, and are different aspects of the same conviviality ambiance.

Besides the cultural experience of enjoying Talha wine in the way it has been continuously consumed, some other patrimonial attractions of the region related with the winemaking method are São Pedro do Corval, for its tradition in pottery, and São Cucufate, the Roman ruins where is possible to understand the vilification process in the Romans era. The connection with the history of the region and due to the low expression of the quantity produced, some respondents, for example, Interviewee #16, defend that "Talha wine is not so much a wine tourism project, it's a project more related with immaterial patrimony and culture. It's in another perspective." These perspectives are not completely dissociated, as the touristic offer that is available, allows visitors to instruct themselves on the history and traditional aspects and enjoy the wine experience as well.

The third dimension to stand out regarding the touristic offer, is Gastronomy, one of the most significant traits of Alentejo culture. Seen as a "very important vehicle for the Alentejo's tourism" by Interviewee #7, most respondents emphasize the complementarity of gastronomy and wine tourism for visitors' satisfaction. In specific when it comes to Talha wine, Interviewee #5 describes "It's a discovery, that the visitor certainly never had before, and always in a context of meal, tapas, so he discovers it in the most remarkable, and lasting in memory, way, the tasting sensations in a context of degustation of regional products with which the wine matches perfectly."

Regarding the integration of different elements in order to provide a relevant tourism product, some producers are establishing partnerships whit other local agents to attract customers that are already in the territory. Some of these partners can be restaurants, underling the narrow relationship between wine tourism and gastronomy. Other partnerships can be established as

well, with the same purpose, such as accommodation options, either local accommodations or even hotels and agencies organizing group visits. All these partnerships allow producers to publicize the experience they developed in their cellars.

Accommodation is transversal through all tourism destination. Some respondents shared their thought regarding the options available for accommodation of visitors. One of the first points was the need of accommodation solution for wine tourists that allows them to enjoy the wine experiences without considering driving afterwards. In this sense, some more remote location struggle with lack of solutions for their guests during demand peaks. Regarding this topic, is possible to signalize some divergent opinions, specialty when considering hotels with high occupation capacity or small accommodation units such as charmed hotels or local accommodations. In the opinion of Interviewee #5 "We have some good hotels and guesthouses, most of the cases in big historical buildings. From the start, it has an added value, we are recovering historical patrimony and attracting quality tourism. We are not massifying. Then we have small accommodation units where is possible to make enogastronomic experiences and, at the end, that is also the clientele we are interested in." Other respondents have a contrary opinion and point the lack of accommodation units with high capacity as one of the main obstacles for the development of touristic activity in the region.

During the interviews, the respondents also presented some current Negative Points of Touristic Offer. The lack of consistency on the development of the tourism sector in the territory was notorious. A restrict number of regions are believed to be ahead of others when it comes to have a structured offer to present. Also, the unbalance between touristic activities, as wine tourism is pointed as a sector with investment, some others lack interest completely. For example, the comment of Interviewee #17 regarding night entertainment "One of the things when we go abroad is to be at the hotel and then, in the night time, there is a displacement to a place to experience certain things. Here there is nothing. When hotels establish themselves here, when Évora has clients who go to Vila de Frades at night to visit a Tavern and hear Cante Alentejano there are no places to receive them." Interviewee #13 has the same line of thought but exemplifies with nature tourism "... from dragonflies watching, or mushrooms, or all kind of plants, savage plants. There is demand for all of it, but in Alentejo there is no offer."

The lack of coordination and planification between stakeholders is pointed as the main obstacle regarding touristic offer, as explained by Interviewee #4 "Sometimes things do not have the repercussion, nor develop, because instead of selling Alentejo as a whole, we are always

looking to our neighbour to see if they're not coping us. Instead or organizing ourselves and really do something for a region which is increasingly deserted and less young... Even some youth would like to stay, but there is no development.”

Regarding the Touristic Offer, the most outstanding discussion points can also be summarized. Following the importance of wine sector in the Alentejo, wine tourism as well appears as highly important for tourism development in the territory. Producers understand the benefits in participating by providing experiences for visitors and consumers, and they act accordingly by contributing to the high-quality perception of the overall wine tourism sector. For small producers, door sales increment is special meaningful, as they might not have the attraction capacity of bigger companies but benefit from the general rise of wine tourists. These factors combined lead to an increase of cellars adhering to wine tourism, adding value for the visitors, growing based on quality, as this particular type of guest demands, and allowing to small business to prosper. Despite the lack of coordination among producers to facilitate the flow of visitors among cellars, valuable partnerships are in place between cellars, restaurants and accommodation. Is usual that visitors ask for recommendations from one place to others, and with this scenario these networks are even more relevant.

Wine tourists are an interesting segment of visitors to attract, not only due to their higher expenditure levels and demand for quality service, but also because they usually visit more than one producer. To maximize this phenomenon and the guest satisfaction, is on the best interest of producers to organize and offer complete experiences with partnerships to eliminate que negative cues of doing a route themselves. To be responsible for their own route can lead to dissatisfaction due to the lack of consistency of the information provided by each producer. To streamline this process, official specialized organizations such as Alentejo Wine Route must function properly and proactively provide this service to visitors. Is also important that producers align their interests and provide reliable and accurate information to guarantee the best experience possible. Despite the obvious need for coordination, this appears to be a major issue in this sector and can be highlighted as a point to improve.

Talha wine-based experiences can diversify both the wine tourism offer as well as the patrimony and culture experiences offer. Other cultural traits, directly connected to this product, can be further explored by visitors, namely, Cante Alentejano, Roman ruins and pottery are some of the attractions able to provide an experience with interest points dispersed through the territory, incentivising the extend of length of stay. The combination of wine and food is also a great

source of visitors' satisfactions, and the interviewed producers enhanced the importance to include regional food products in wine tastings to make them memorable.

Concerning accommodation, some respondents defend the creation of small high-end units, contributing for the perceived quality of the destination, as some others refer the lack of units capable to accept groups and excursions. Both parties agree in the lack of overall accommodation options outside main cities, what can be an obstacle considering the negative cue of having to drive after a wine tasting.

4.2.3. Talha Wine

The subsequent main category is Talha wine itself, the product was analysed in Comparison with Conventional Wines, regarding its making Process and the Tradition it is part of. The fact that is made in Small Production will be further explored, as well as the specificities of the amphoras, Talhas, it is made in and the importance of the DOC created for it. Why some respondents consider it an Innovative Product, as some other say it is a Product without Innovation was also a curious output. How it can be an Attraction for the Region, what Experiences can be built around this thematic, why it is a Differential Product and how it is today in terms of Demand and Valorisation of Talha wine are the most relevant points. The last aspect to be explored is the Altered Talha wine that has been emerging lately and how this is faced by the interviewed stakeholders.

Talha wine profile is clearly different from the internationally accepted wine profile and this is the main difference in Comparison with Conventional Wines. Interviewee #7 synthesizes these differences in the following words: "The international wine profile is a wine with much more technological scents, eventually with wood, rounder wines. The Talha wine is all but that, so, Talha wines are natural wines, they are not in contact with wood, they are made in clay amphoras. The scents are all but commercial and technological, they are scents that derive only from the grape, there is nothing else, and from the long stage it has with the grape skins. This wine is not processed in any way, it does not include any modern technology in its making. There is not the option to correct or enhance any features of the wine with chemistry. This technique is a time travel to when winemakers were not able to use modern processes." The scents and flavours differences lead to a "love or hate" reaction from the public, as justified by Interviewee #21 "Firstly, we taste, then we get used to it and then we like it. The Talha wine is a little bit like that. As we are so used to a certain wine style, when we taste Talha wine, because

it is so different, you end up liking it, love it, or not.” Other differences are the history of the wine that dates to the Roman era, approximately 2000 years ago, and the families' tradition of making it at home in a very artisanal way.

The winemaking process was detailed by a few respondents, and they match the process described in literature. From the processes some producers shared, it is possible to identify some variances. This was also a problem when creating a formal procedure description. This work was made with the intent to classify the Talha wine technique as Intangible Cultural Heritage. Interviewee #17 explores this difficulty, “this is the procedure that is wished to be considered Humanity Heritage and not all the small variations of the process, local variations or expressions of the individual taste or the individual mentoring that sometimes are repeated by parents and grandparents are little variations which are not fundamental for what is structuring in Talha wine.” The technique used to make Talha wine was brought to Alentejo by Romans. The modern producers try to keep it as faithful as possible to its origins. That is why Alentejo is considered the guardian of such technique.

The Tradition of Talha wine is intrinsically connected with Alentejo's culture. It is the wine which accompanies the social life in some Alentejo villages. “Talha wine was made to be drunk while feasting and lunching with friends, to give to other friends, using the well-known demijohns of water after void to transport it. It is for one's consumption, to give to family for favours payment... That kind of things.” as stated by Interviewee #13.

The opening of the Talhas is the most important day in this tradition, in Saint Martin's day, November 11th. This marks the beginning of the season when Talha wine is available. Traditionally, it has no added components and it is not possible to bottle it, so Talha wine is a seasonal product. It must be drunk during the following months while the climate conditions allow it. These homemade productions do not allow production with volume. In fact, the most traditional producers, those who produce the wine at home by themselves and only for domestic consumption can have productions as small as 150 lt. Even the producers who make this wine with intention to sell, tend to have small quantities, without expression in the region total wine production. One of the reasons why Talha wine production is limited is because today it is not possible to produce any more Talhas, the clay amphorae they are made in. Secondly, all the process is manual which increases the costs. This production is also only made in Alentejo, and for this reason, rare. These are typical features of artisanal products, making this wine something exclusive with higher intrinsic value.

Regarding the recipient where the wine is made, the clay amphora named Talha, is also considered part of patrimony itself. Today, there is little or no capacity to create more Talhas, due to their size and the lack of ovens with the dimension needed to cook them. More recently, one producer have been dedicated to this art but despite the advances already made, the amphoras are still in trial phase and therefore cannot contribute already to an increase in the production capacity (Coelho and Carvalho, 2019). Today is only possible to use the production capacity in place, and there is only a second-hand market for this amphoras. Some of them with centuries of usage, as exemplified by Interviewee #12 “We have Talhas from 1845, in other cellars there are Talhas from 1674 which still make wine.”

In an attempt to preserve this method from adulteration, in 2010 the Regional Wine Commission of Alentejo created a statute for Talha wine, allowing it to use the DOC Talha Alentejo if produced accordingly to the legislation. Today, there is 30 certified Talha wine producers, and only those can use the name Talha, this is a certification of quality and aims to prevent the abusive usage of such expression to name wines which production do not comply with the regulation or is produced outside the legal geographic limited regions. These facts were clearly stated by Interviewee #7 “... only Alentejo, in its Appellation of Origen, is allowed to make certified Talha wine. The other regions cannot have that question of placing Talha on the label, only Alentejo can.”

A question which divided the respondents' opinion, regarded the innovation behind Talha wine. As some classified it as an Innovative Product, for its differences when compared to the wines that the market is used to consume. Specially for the ancestral method used. The tradition and culture enclosed in this wine are also seen as innovative once they provide a valuable differentiation factor. In the words of Interviewee #5 “It is innovative for those who are discovering it now, who is discovering a wine which dates to the origins of winemaking, that reflects the purest way to make wine. From that point, maybe now, for the new consumers or even new produces who adventure in the imitation of this art, it is indeed innovative. Its innovative because it tears the concept of modern wine.” Some other producers stated that the only innovation regarding this product is the bottling, since this wine is not traditionally bottled, but instead directly consumed from the amphora.

Another faction of respondents argued that Talha wine is a Product without Innovation, if done accordingly to the traditional procedure. It is seen as a throwback to the origins of wine, and that was already a reality before all the other kinds of wine we know today.

In terms of Attraction for the Region, the interviewees were asked about the capacity of Talha wine to arouse the curiosity of potential visitors to come to the region. The general response was that the Talha wine, for its status of exclusivity, is seen as a way to create interest for the Alentejo region and other regional products. Either for other wines produced in Alentejo, but also for the gastronomical, patrimonial and cultural touristic offer. About this topic, Interviewee #8 emphasizes: "Talha wine has a very strong cultural heritage in Alentejo. I would even say that to deeply understand what it Talha wine it must be consumed in Alentejo. Namely in the taverns, in the Talha's cellars with the locals."

Other than to experience the Talha wine itself, this wine is also advertised with the intention to bring attention to the region and other products. Due to the reduced production volume, the "communication does not have a necessarily commercial goal. There is the intention to create contents for the region, to create interest" as explained by Interviewee #3. Talha wine is considered to be a trend, as it is an identity product which is a factor of differentiation during the globalization era.

More than attract visitors, the expectation is that Talha wine may also attract investment to the territory. Currently, there is already interest from touristic agencies in this product, "... who have programmes with visits to the cellars, to see how the wine is made and to be associated with the process..." as mentioned by Interviewee #16. For the future, in the words of Interviewee #17, "When Talha wine is considered Intangible Culture Heritage, the attention of big hotel groups will awake."

The kind of Experiences that can be provided by Talha wine are all related not only with the theoretical explanations of the historical background of the winemaking method and a wine tasting but can also include active participation from the visitors. As Interviewee #24, explains, "We must provide a new element to the touristic offer, people do not only want to listen, they also want to participate, touch and experience. For that reason, this is the concept we have been betting on."

More than participate in the tradition of drinking the wine with locals in taverns, directly from the amphora and listening to Cante Alentejano, there are even some more intimate experiences available, as the one described by Interviewee #25 "It is possible to visit particular cellars, family ones, on the bottom part or in an annex of the house. And with the landlord, to get to know the winemaking process, the lifestyle associated with it, the name of the people who

participate. It is a very intimate experience.” Other types of experiences based on this product are the increasing number of events related with the opening of the amphoras, which brings flows of visitors during this period. One example is given by Interviewee #14, regarding the affluence of one of these events, the Amphora Wine Day, “It has an attendance of approximately 1200 people, which is a very significant number of people, who go to the Alentejo for a feast at Rocim.” Also Interviewee #12 emphasizes how visitors curious about Talha wine impact the economy of Viva Alva, one of the most traditional villages: “... the time of the year when we see more people, visiting the cellars and tasting the wine is in the new wine's time.”

In terms of Differentiation Factors, most of the respondents admit that the fact of this methodology has been preserved through time in Alentejo, can now differentiate this region in relation to others for having this unique offer which cultural context cannot be reproduced anywhere else. The fact that it represents the origins of wine, one of the oldest ways known to make wine, is also source of curiosity. “Talha wine is considered to be a natural wine because the genesis of the process prevents it to be intervened” this justification given by Interviewee #14, explains why this wine attracts a segment of costumers who look for natural and even biological wines.

The fact that it has the capacity to differentiate from other wines so obviously also reflects in terms of economical Valorisation of the wine. Is considered a boutique wine, a niche product, currently in vogue. Its consumers are described as having higher incomes than the average wine consumer and are willing to pay for the artisanal character of the Talha wine. Producers also stand out the costs inherent to this wine, the fact that the whole process is made by hand and how this impossibilities scale production. All these factors influence the price paid for the final consumer. Nevertheless, in the opinion of Interviewee #3 there is still a path to follow to reach a just market value for this wine, especially in the export market where Talha wines are devalued when compared with other types of amphora wines, and adds “Today, the demand for certified Talha wines exceeds the offer.” Regarding the current Demand for these wines it appears to be increasing. As an increasing number of producers and touristic operators admit they are being contacted by customers looking for Talha wine. This is, in the opinion of Interviewee #23, a growing segment “Currently, what we have here now, regarding wine tourism in the region, are visitors looking for the industrialized wine production and we have more and more visitors looking for the Talha wine production method.”

With all the interest created around Talha wine, traditional producers and other stakeholders committed to preserve the method as loyal as possible to its origin, shared some concerns regarding the distortion of this art. Recently, some product variations have been noticed, and they are referred as Altered Talha wine. These variations can be the usage of foreign grape varieties, the production outside the traditional region, the usage of amphoras as a recipient to mature the wine in complementation with inox, the appliance of clay dust inside the wine or the alternative inner lining of the Talhas. Accepting that different types of amphora wines can coexist in the market, Interviewee #9 clarifies the difference: "... is very important, once this distinction exists, to clearly show the difference for those who buy it, so they do not 'buy pig in a poke'. Meaning, when buying Talha wine, the consumer is not getting wine matured in clay amphoras."

This category is central in the understanding of how Talha wine is currently perceived. The tradition starts with the winemaking process. Once there is the interest to classify the technique as Intangible Cultural Heritage, there must be a procedure to follow. Despite being the guardian of this winemaking technique, is difficult to stablish a standard way to do it since different versions of it might be perpetuated, passing from generation to generation. This is more expressive when considering self-consumption productions since each family has the freedom to adapt the recipe to their taste. Nonetheless, these domestic productions are not significant in the Alentejo's wine production despite being a real expression of tradition. The amphora used is also unique from Alentejo, and it represent a limitation since currently there is no production of Talhas. Due to impossibility to extend the production capacity, this product will always be rare and produced in small quantities. The wine itself is not innovative in the way that the technique used not only is not a novelty, but it must be as similar as possible to the original one. It is described as a return to the origin of wine. Despite this, it is innovative in the way that is disruptive to what is the globally accepted wine profile and satisfies a market segment that was unexplored before.

Because of its disruptive profile, its acceptance depends on the availability of the consumer to try different wine profiles. This might not always happen due to the strong habitude for wood flavoured wines. Wine also can be distinguished by its history and the longevity of existence of the company which produces it. Talha wine is considered the origin of wine and the historical background is an important feature of its communication. The maintenance of the wine making method also implies not to use any of the modern ingredients used in chemical intervention of

wine, this leads to a more natural wine which is highly valuable by a segment of consumers who look for non-processed products.

As any other identity features, Talha wine must be used to differentiate the territory and attract visitors, consumers for regional products and investors' attention for the opportunities seizing in the destination. Currently, it is already explored as a cultural experience combining diverse traits. Moreover, is also a potential theme for events, standing alone such in the case of the Talha wine competitions, or together with other regional wines and gastronomy products.

In terms of valorisation of the product, Talha wine already presents a price point higher than the average wine, due to its rarity, artisanal character and higher willingness to pay of its consumers. Nonetheless, currently the demand for certified Talha wine outstrips the supply, this implies the undervaluation of the wine. This certification, named DOC Talha Alentejo, was established to protect the integrity of such technique and to prevent the abusive usage of the name Talha to identify wine with adulterated recipes or made outside the proper regions. Indeed, the major concern shared by all stakeholders was the emergence of winemakers claiming to produce Talha wine but applying different techniques. These variations diverge clearly from the process that was previously established and create a situation of abusive usage of Talha name and disloyal competition since costs are much lower and the prices are too competitive. It also affects the credibility of other producers and jeopardizes the historical value of such tradition.

4.2.4. Talha Wine Consumers

The following thematic concerns Talha wine Consumers. With the intent to establish a profile for this niche market segment, the focus was the age range, the income level, where they live, the wine knowledge they possess and if they had any previous knowledge regarding Talha wine specifically. When asked who were the most propitious type of consumers that would take interest in such a product, most of the respondents immediately distinguish the local consumer and the urban consumer. Talha wine is the everyday wine in these regions, so locals are the first market segment to have access to it. The Local Consumer is many times also a producer. This segment is characterized for having contact with this tradition all their lives, maybe even production units in their own households. The second category of potential consumers were the ones living in urban centres, with medium to high income levels, access to information and interest in history and culture.

Regarding the Knowledge about Wine, usually Talha wine consumers already have experience in wines, they may even be wine lovers, looking for an alternative profile wine different from the standard. Also, consumers looking for biological or nature-based products, due to its low level of oenology intervention. These customers tend to be sensitive and influenced by the market trends, in the words of Interviewee #8, "... today, the trend of Talha wine is a fact. It is a trend, in the entire world. In the hope of meeting and consuming the so-called primordial wine."

For the Nacional Market, outside from the original region of Talha wine, consumers belong mostly to urban areas and the further they are from Alentejo the less information regarding this product they have. Regarding visitors, is also possible to divide them in two categories, as exposed by Interviewee #23: "... the nationals can also be divided in different categories. We have those who come to drink without criterial. This is not the most interesting type of visitor. But then we also have a more enlightened, cultural evolved visitor, who comes to taste, appreciate, fall in love for the product."

As for the International Market, most producers admit receiving foreign visitors from the most diverse points of the globe. The most frequent nationalities mentioned were, Brazil, United States of America, Canada, and Central Europe. Regarding the francophone market, Interviewee #5 explains that this market "... maintains this tradition, even the youngest have a remarkable wine culture. And they have a great appetite for this style of wine because they are fresh, gastronomic wines, which sit well at the table and match their lifestyle, their profile". The same producer shares the obstacle felt with the Anglo-Saxon market: "We are having some difficulty in penetrating this market, because although there is an opening for wines with a different profile, it is an audience that is still very much based on wines with great aging in barrels."

Despite all respondents had agreed that Talha wine is a niche product, it was not possible to specify any age range for consumers, as the answers varied from 25 to 70 years old. The Older Consumers appear as the most willing to try Talha wine, once they will probably have a wider wine experience. As for the Younger Consumers, they appear to be more sensitive to trends, and the Talha wine trend arouses their curiosity. Also, they fit the category of consumers looking for more natural and organic wines.

Another dimension related with the consumers was the Previous Knowledge they have about Talha wine. If they still know the wine through the producers or if they are currently proactively searching for this product. The answers varied accordingly to the producer, but all agreed that both factions exist. This phenomenon is explained by Interviewee #3, "... in the last 5 years it has been increasing, the number of people coming because of Talha wine, but is a very recent phenomenon..." As some producers claim to be searched for informed visitors who wish to be further instructed on the topic. Other producers admit focussing their efforts on communicating the wine and create awareness regarding this production. The view of Interviewee #13 on the disclosure of Talha wine, "People look for Talha wine, not because they like it, but because they do not know it. Most of the people do not know it and go to tasted Talha wine for the first time. So, we are still in the discovery phase. Meaning this is still in the beginning."

Despite no specific segment emerged from the analysis of this category, it was possible to identify some interested niche segments. The first one, the local consumer, is highly connected with the production and consumption of such wine. Despite of its high interest in the product, is not the most interesting market segment for companies. Talha wine Consumers can also be divided in those who have a long history of appreciating wine and those who follow the market trends. This also varies accordingly to their age, as this product attracts all age ranges. Older consumers usually have a broad experience regarding wine and use this opportunity to further learn on the topic. As for younger consumers, sensible to trends, look at the product with curiosity and value the natural profile of it.

Nationwide, consumer can be either locals or urbans. Urban consumers have less knowledge regarding Talha wine. These guests can visit the territory simply because they enjoy drinking wine, and in this case, they do not value the cultural context of Talha wine, or to enjoy all facets of the cultural experienced, besides the wine tasting. Internationally, consumers seem to be widely dispersed, and the main markets mentioned coincide with the main nationalities visiting the territory.

Despite the old tradition of Talha wine in Alentejo, it is a recent phenomenon for visitors. Today, there is still the need for explanation and contextualization of the product, meaning that further efforts on communication are still needed. Nevertheless, there are an increasing number of informed visitors who approach producers with intention to experience Talha wine.

4.2.5. Communication

The Communication used by producers and other entities varies greatly. From the producers' side, all use social media platforms and websites, as they understand the importance of an optimized online presence to enhance customer loyalty (Pereira *et al.*, 2016). Complementarily, they also use national and international specialized press. The image of the product is also important as it must clearly transmit the type of wine the customers can find inside. Aside from this, producers also stated the need for personal involvement when communicating Talha wine. The need to be present at events, business trips to potential markets, tastings with journalists, distributors and potential clients is shared by the respondents and is the main technique. Partnerships with other local business, are also a channel to reach potential customers, as exemplified by Interviewee #19 "... we work a lot with passing by customers. Or that they schedule from one day to the next one or from morning to afternoon. In the meantime, they come from local accommodations, hotels and touristic entertainment companies, but essentially from accommodation. And we call them because we have distribution of pamphlets among the partners..." The presence of the producer can be decisive for a successful communication. In this sense, some producers mentioned how Tastings are one of the most effective ways of communication as exemplified by Interviewee #3 "In our marketing activity, we have been doing tastings, masterclasses and seminars in our main markets which are the United States, Brazil, Switzerland... In the seminars that we have done, we have always taken Talha wine. Even in the United States, where the impact is strongest, we even did some actions only dedicated to Talha wine."

The peculiarities of this products force it to have a specific Communication Style. More than to present the wine, most producers also enhanced the story behind the product, aspects such as the tradition, the method, and the artisanal character, which are key to arouse consumers curiosity. Since Talha wine's profile is very distant from the wine profile most consumers expect, producers described their communication style as explanatory, as they must contextualize the product. In the case of Interviewee #14, "... we always do this proximity work with our partners and with our partners' customers. We explain, inform and educate about what is Talha wine, where it is made, how it is made, why it is made like this. And what kind of wine they can expect to have at the end."

Different types of Events are made to promote Talha wine. From annual competitions, to wine fairs, trade fairs, events promoted by producers and other promoted by the Municipalities. Some

of those events are exclusive for Talha wine, some others for amphora's wine, regional wines in general or even regional products and traditions. About these events, Interviewee #22 stated "... specific events keep appearing exclusively for Talha wines. We usually make sure we participate because they are specific lines of communication. The consumer really goes there already looking for this type of product." As referred by Interviewee #23, Vitifardes was "In 1998 an association created here in Vila de Frades, for the preservation and promotion of Talha wine. And at that time, it created a contest to award Talha winemakers for their quality." This is the oldest event of its kind and counts already with 23 editions.

There is also an increase number of Projects based on the product. Most of them emerge from the willing to preserve the tradition by making the public interested in it. The first initiative of this kind was Vitifardes with the wine festival, including the wine competition, but also routes to the cellars and other related activities.

For the future, another project are also being prepared by the Municipality of Vidigueira in partnership with a consultancy firm, namely the Talha wine Route, which is planned to include other cultural traits, such as Cante Alentejano and Gastronomy, and also a patrimonial education facet, adapted for children. This project will include an interpretation centre, workshops, a museum, the route itself and programmes adapted for infants, both locals and visitors. The Regional Entity for Tourism of Alentejo and Ribatejo also has an initiative including the promotion of Talha wine, as exposed by Interviewee #16 "We have a project, a catalogue of intangible heritage and culture. One of the products we have, which we want development proposals to appear in, is Talha wine."

The project with wide visibility and in which different stakeholders are currently focusing their efforts is Talha wine application for UNESCO Intangible Cultural Heritage, which will be analysed independently.

In summary, to reach the public, the interviewed producers use social media, specialized press, personal tastings, attend to events and wine fairs and place partnerships with other tourism business lines. All interviewed producers enhanced the importance of being present in the moment when the other part is tasting the wine. There is the need to deeply explain the wine context and profile so who is tasting understands the difference in scents and flavours.

Also, the theming potential of this product is already being explored, with several events dedicated to, or including, Talha wine. This is a growing tendency, Talha wine is not only more

present in general events related with the destination's traditional products but is also the main figure of some of these gatherings. Public entities and associations are also determined to preserve and disclose Talha wine. From Vitifrades association with more than 20 years of existence, to the inclusion of Talha wine's producers in Alentejo's Wine Routes to new initiatives from Vidigueira municipality, such as the application for UNESCO Intangible Culture Heritage and the future Talha Wine Route, and the inclusion of it in a regional cultural catalogue by Turismo do Alentejo.

4.2.6. Application Process for UNESCO Intangible Cultural Heritage

Talha wine is currently going under the Application Process for UNESCO Intangible Cultural Heritage. This is a priority stated by the Municipality of Vidigueira in the framework of valorisation of the territory's patrimony. In the words of Interviewee #24 "At the moment, with the application, we have 20 municipalities involved, 7 entities that are bound to attend, as is the example of the Direção Regional de Cultura and the Entidade Regional de Turismo do Alentejo e Ribatejo, and we continue to receive demonstrations from other municipalities to join this application." This process includes some phases that will enhance the product recognition such as the enrolment of Talha wine in the National Inventory of Intangible Cultural Heritage, the possible attribution of an artisan certificate to Talha wine producers which "... through the craftsman's letter it allows the use of the expression 'Artisanal Fabrication', 'Artisanal Mode', 'Artisanal Product' etc." as explained by Interviewee #18. Additionally, a plan to safeguard the traditional method. It matters to underline that this recognition process regards the method of winemaking and not the final product itself.

This was one of the most fracturing subjects approached, as the enthusiasm of some stakeholders was balanced with Scepticism from others. One of the main motives for this lack of faith in the project is the fact that Talha wine is a heritage from the romans era and other territories should also be included, or, even, should be distinguished before Alentejo. Even if approved, some respondents do not identify only advantages, as they also consider that this kind of attention might attract producers with only economical interest who can eventually distort what is the authenticity of the product. Also, some defend that if a great number of classifications is attributed, it can lose its credibility and sense of exclusivity. The last critic identified was the non-consideration of the most diffuse production forms, the ones made by

locals, in their own houses without commercialization purposes, for being too residual to be accounted.

The majority of the interviewees were able to identify Advantages on this process, being the most notable one the positive impact in communication, in particular to international markets. The classification of this product, in combination with other cultural traits already classified, elevates the touristic offer quality perception, and consists in an opportunity to communicate with greater visibility the valuable aspects of the territory. In terms of visitor's attraction, most of respondents consider this can boost the interest to discover Alentejo. Also, is expected that this attracts investors for the development of the tourism sector. Regarding the product itself, producers hope this distinction translates in a wider interest with more consumers tasting the wine and a correspondent economical valorisation. The preservation of the technique and the underlying tradition was highlighted as the most important facet of this classification. Since it is essential to guaranty the longevity of the cultural good to be considered UNESCO Intangible Cultural Heritage.

As this classification is in the best interest of all stakeholders, there was the attempt to evaluate the Engagement level of the participants. As most of respondents have the opinion that this product is turning the attentions of a rising number of producers and consumers, but also from public authorities, who are increasingly concerned on its promotion and preservation. When concerning the UNESCO application in particular, only non-productive stakeholders are involved. For this reason, most producers admit not to have any or little information regarding the process developments. Also, some of the participant municipalities affirm to have none or little feedback posteriorly to the mapping of Talha wine producers in each county. The feedback from the promoting municipality reflects that the level of engagement varies among the participants, and the greats variation are from the ones without operational production units.

From this section of results, is possible to identify the following remarkable points. As the valorisation of the territory is priority for most municipalities, Vidigueira Municipality launched an application for UNESCO Intangible Cultural Heritage regarding the winemaking technique of Talha wine. Despite the closure of this application, intermediate goals already have a positive impact for the preservation and recognition of the product. The advantages perceived from the UNESCO application are related with a boost in the communications and visibility of both the product and the territory. This can also positively impact the perceive quality of the

patrimonial and cultural touristic offer of Alentejo, creating an attraction for visitors and investors.

Nevertheless, some critic voices arouse regarding the UNESCO application. Not everyone believes that it will be classified because, in the case of a roman heritage, other territories should be included and the most diffuse productions, made by families for self-consumption, should also be covered. Even if classified, there is some apprehension that this might attract the wrong kind of investment and the phenomenon of Altered Talha wine might gain more adepts. Also, if the attribution of such statute becomes vulgar it can lose its interest.

4.2.7. Future

The last topic analyses the expectation each interviewee has for the Future of the tourism sector in Alentejo, and how Talha wine fits in this scenario. One popular opinion among the respondents was that the Future of the Touristic Offer should respect history and tradition, to use cultural traits as a differentiator from other destinations and be based on regional products to enhance territorial economic cohesion. The collaboration between different activities was also pointed as key so the region can present solid, complete and customizable touristic products, with clear presentation of the different accommodation options, experiences available and restaurants. Along with the need for the structuring of an integrated offer transversal to all components, also the cooperation between winemakers and wine related experiences providers could add value for wine tourists, since most of those visitors are interested in visiting several producers. In the words of Interviewee #19 "... an integrated offer, not only with other partners such as accommodation and restauration, but also an integrated offer at the producers' level. Meaning, we could create routes in which people would visit several cellars." Despite the need for cooperation which is widely recognized, is also one of the most mentioned obstacles to overcome.

Another topic mentioned was the need for qualified professionals who would be able to provide higher quality service and contribute for a strong and promising sector, as exposed by Interviewee #14 "Because there must be more competent people in the area of tourism in the region. And that is difficult, bringing them to the region. So, they can better develop tourism in the region."

The expectation regarding the Future of Talha wine, is that this regional product, in combination with others which only exist in Alentejo, can contribute to the quality and authenticity of Alentejo's culture, allowing it to differentiate from other destinations. Some producers claim to receive already a segment of visitors who dislocate to Alentejo primarily to taste and experience Talha wine. In the opinion of some, this phenomenon has the potential to be expanded. The producers underline the exclusivity of the product and importance of guarantee its authenticity and quality rather than to increase the production volume. This leads to a logic of Niche Product. Concerned with the maintenance of the tradition, some respondents defend a communication towards interested visitors, who value the cultural traits and are willing to pay for this exclusive and authentic experiences, which could not be reproduced in scale. Due to the small quantities that Talha wine can be properly made, it is not considered to be fit for group experiences. The same respondents also enhance the good work already made in this sense, with the creation of small units with high level of quality service. These attract the type of visitors who are fit for the consumption of Talha wine and other artisanal products. In the words of Interviewee #8 "In practical terms, I would say Talha wine is ideal for niche tourism, for the couple of tourists with purchasing power who go in their car and visit the winery and everything associated with it."

The alternative of Massify the touristic activity in Alentejo is as terrifying for some as it is highly desired by others. The discussion against this course of action have two main arguments, the loss of life quality of locals and the distortion of the destination's attraction factors, such as the relaxing environment away from urban concentrations. The ones who see in mass tourism the vehicle for equal economic development argue "... those people then cannot complain that the region has not developed. If they themselves voted for limitation policies. That does not seem coherent to me." citing Interviewee #7 on the topic. A few respondents believe that the territory has the potential to offer products for groups and excursions that, if well managed, can bring major benefits for the region. And has also the capacity to provide exclusive and tailor-made products for differentiated visitors.

Interviewees also revealed which thematic are sources of Concern for the Future. Regarding the product under analyse, the main concern is the increase in its production and the incentive given by the possible classification by UNESCO. In the words of Interviewee #5 "... such recognition always has these problems and has to work hard to protect the genuine product and safeguard from tampering." To prevent this from happening, producers expressed the urge for

the responsible authorities to intervene, creating clear and detailed regulation as well as to establish consequences for those who do not act accordingly and abusively use the Talha wine name.

In the opinion of Interviewee #17, the development of the touristic offer will happen when interest in Alentejo is widespread and the region has the infrastructure to receive a larger number of visitors. In his precise words "I am convinced that large hotel groups will have to move towards the construction or adaptation of real estate structures to receive tours. They will have to adapt, otherwise... I do not think the Alentejo can live exclusively from a small volume of dispersed tourism and that's what's happening here at the moment."

The time when the interviews were conducted was marked by the most recent Pandemic, caused by COVID-19. This impacted greatly the general tone of the conversations, particularly the part of the conversation reserved for the future. As so, it was interesting to see how different stakeholders are facing these times of uncertainty. Some respondents were able to abstract themselves from the situation and answer having in mind the long-term future, in which the pandemic will likely be resolved. Most of the respondents referred this fact at least once, and some even answered not to have any prospect for the future due to the recent happenings. The current situation of tourism in Alentejo is of total stop. During this time, all tourism related business stand by, expectants on what will happen in the near future but without being able of any provision.

Despite the total apprehension of some, it was possible to hear some positive thoughts of others. For example, the vision of Interviewee #26: "This morning I heard, in an interview with the Minister for Economy, that they were probably going to open up the markets mainly to northern Europe. The fact that Portugal is at the moment, and has a good image in terms of, controlling the pandemic, is a factor of attractiveness, especially for the north of Europe. And this could be interesting and an opportunity." There is also the perception of decreasing in the importance of the external market for the territory, balanced with the perspective of an increase in the internal market. It was not possible to gather a consistent feedback from this topic since each stakeholder is being impacted in a different way.

The expectation of stakeholders for the future are one of the main focus of the current research, in this sense, this last category includes some of the most relevant insights. Stakeholders see culture and tradition as a competitive advantage and as well to dynamize local economy. An

integrated offer is also desired by the interviewees, highlighting the need for cooperation among stakeholders to offer an appealing touristic product that could be consistently communicated to potential markets. Along with the quality of the cultural experiences, was also mentioned the importance of qualified human resources to enhance the quality perception of the destination.

As for the touristic offer in general, the main concern is the attractiveness of the territory for major players to invest and operate in Alentejo, dynamizing the sector. The possible massification of tourism in Alentejo divides the opinions of the respondents. The negative side of this question is the association of mass tourism with loss of life quality of residents and loss of character of the destination. The optimistic point of view defends that large flows of visitors can be a vehicle for homogenization of economic development with other regions of Portugal. Despite this fracturing issue, most of the respondents affirm that Alentejo has the availability to welcome both niche markets and provide customized experiences, as well as receiving excursions and provide standard touristic products.

Talha wine appears in this panorama as part of the cultural offer able to leverage the tourism sector in Alentejo. Producers defend that the future of Talha wine is to be produced with high quality and not in greater quantities, labelling it as a niche product. The most concerning themes when considering the future of Talha wine is the preservation of the traditional techniques. The fear of Altered Talha Wine damaging the image of the traditional handmade wine is a concern that led producers to request to regulatory entities for a fierce intervention against these misleading actions.

The pandemic generated a context of deep uncertainty, the tourism sector was completely paralyzed by it and some respondents even claimed that tourism would retreat instead of growing in the future. This public health issue was faced by some with optimism, as this can be seen as an opportunity to advertise Alentejo as a safe and pleasant destination. Despite the recent growth of external markets in the territory, another strategy to deal with the pandemic consequences might be to refocus in the domestic market.

For better interpretation of the interviews results, a table was assembled with the most outstanding insights derived from this section

Table 2 Interviews' Results – Summary Table

Positive points - Present	Negative points - Present
<p>Advantages:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wine tourists have higher expenditure levels than the average visitor and visit more than one cellar. • Talha wine can diversify both wine tourism and cultural tourism offer and can incentive the extension of length of stay • Talha wine reflect the region where it is made. • Talha wine is highly connected with Cante Alentejano, typical taverns, gastronomy, Roman heritage and pottery. • Talha wine is an identity feature of Alentejo and arouses curiosity. • High involvement of producers with wine experiences complying with the wine tourism principles. • Modern and digital Alentejo wine route office with direct booking with the producers. • Partnerships between cellars, restaurants and accommodations. • Creation of DOC Talha Alentejo. • Thematic events about and/or including Talha wine. • Younger generations are interested in continuing this tradition. 	<p>Fragilities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Disruptive profile might face resistance from the market. • Seasonal product. • Is necessary to contextualize the product in person, which can be expensive and time consuming. • Production limit to current capacity due to the lack of new Talhas. • The handmade process makes it impossible to be produced in scale and increases production costs. <p>Improvement points:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of qualified human resources with language skill and history knowledge to support cultural experiences. • Insufficient accommodation options outside main cities. • Lack of consistent information provided by producers. • Partnerships in routes and integrated offers to eliminate negative cues. • Coordination among stakeholders.
Positive points - Future	Negative Points - Future

Talha Wine as a Differentiation Factor of Alentejo's Wine Tourism Offer

<p>Trends:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Safe and low population density destinations. It can be attractive during the pandemic situation. • Culture as differentiation factor in the globalization era. • Nature based products, with low chemical intervention. • Wine reflecting the region where they are made in. • Authentic and co-creative cultural experiences. • Talha wine has a disruptive profile. • Mass tourism: Homogenization of interregional economic development and increase of demand for all products available. <p>Alentejo and Talha wine fit in the trends by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • UNESCO Intangible Cultural Heritage application may lead to preservation and recognition of this tradition. • Increase in visitors increments door sales for small producers. • Talha wine has an unexplored market segment. • Demand outstrips supply, there is margin to rise prices. • Bottling and commercialization outside the region. • Talha wine appeals to urban consumers globally • Talha wine can create awareness for visitors, consumers for other regional products and investors. • Public entities and support and communicate Talha wine. • Prospect of new projects related with Talha wine • Niche product, producers focus on producing high quality wine rather than greater quantities. 	<p>Concerns:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Existence of other types of amphora wines with greater historical background. • UNESCO application might attract attention for altered Talha wine production. • Too many UNESCO classifications may lead to loss of interest on this distinction. • Altered Talha wine with considerable cost reduction leads to disloyal competition. • Abusive usage of Talha name in bottles which do not contain properly done Talha wine jeopardizes the credibility of authentic Talha wine. • Mass tourism: loss of life quality and loss of regional character. • Lack of attractiveness for major companies to develop greater accommodation capacity. • Uncertainty caused by the pandemic outbreak of Covid.19
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Source: Own Elaboration

5. Conclusions

Rural areas have found in tourism a diversification tool for their main economic activities and a complementary income source for the ongoing activities, such agriculture (Pablo-Romero and Molina, 2013). This sector had to go under some severe adaptation to the new scenarios and challenges presented by these areas. From the lack of infrastructure (Ciolac *et al.*, 2019) and qualified human resources (Fons *et al.*, 2011) to the necessity of environmental responsible activities to guarantee the preservation of local economic activities and lifestyle (Hector Ceballos-Lascurain, 1996). Different tourism types are currently available in rural region, mostly related with landscape and local culture. At the same time, tourism demand shifts from massified leisure activities to cultural experiences, becoming a form of cultural consumption (Dujmović and Vitasović, 2016). This represents an opportunity for rural areas to present themselves as alternative destinations with culture and nature oriented touristic offers. Particularly, wine tourism represents a growing phenomenon that should be further developed in regions where wine is already economically relevant, functioning in complementarity with the already existent wine culture (Winfrey *et al.*, 2018). This tourism type is intrinsically connected with other cultural traits, namely gastronomy, but the concept can be enlarged to general culture experiences, agritourism co-creation experiences and engagement with local lifestyle Charters and Ali-Knight (2002). Wine tourism works as an incentive for the adoption of sustainable tourism principles once the preservation of environmental features is necessary for the success of the touristic activity. The adoption of sustainable tourism models leads, not only, to the sustainability of the wine tourism activity but also to other economic activities with high importance for residents (Sampaio, 2012).

Considering the profile of wine tourists, as being demanding in what concerns the quality of offered experiences at the destination (Marzo-Navarro and Pedraja-Iglesias, 2009), the strategy for wine tourism must not focus on standard products for an increasing number of visitors and wine sales maximization, but instead, on customizable and education oriented experiences. This way will be possible to create long term added value to the sector, through the enlargement of the market segment, visitor's loyalty and increased expenditure per visitor (Priilaid *et al.*, 2020). These visitors do not wish to visit one cellar or enjoying one wine experience only, therefore the wine tourism strategy design must include multiple cellars or other contact points that will act in complementarity with each

other to enhance guest satisfaction. This satisfaction is also related with the sense of novelty and delight every time they visit a different point of a given route. Routes can also be organized by themes, creating immersive cultural experiences (Gu *et al.*, 2019; Loureiro, 2010). Each cellar must maintain its differentiable engaging features. Even small producers, who often do not have the same visibility of famous wineries, contribute with their characteristic authenticity, playing a relevant role in guest satisfaction and can benefit from being included in routes (Gu *et al.*, 2019).

Considering the potential of wine tourism and the importance of authenticity in cultural experiences, the study aims to provide meaningful insights on the role of Talha wine, a regional product from Alentejo, in the overall panorama of wine tourism in this region. The present research includes an exploratory study for which 26 producers and representatives from other related organizations contributed with an interview. The qualitative data collected was posteriorly analysed with the assistance of Atlas.ti software. The results obtained allowed to identify key dimensions in the relationship between Talha wine and wine tourism.

5.1. Theoretical contributions

The research performed in the present dissertation aimed to assess the potential of Talha wine as a differentiation feature of Alentejo as a wine tourism destination. This main question can be further divided in two research questions, (1) clarify what is the role of Talha wine in the wine tourism panorama today and (2) what are the expectations from stakeholders for the future of Talha wine regarding its touristic potential.

The study was developed with a funnel logic, starting with the possibility to use tourism as an economic development tool, explaining the constraints of rural areas and in which specific aspects this activity would be beneficial for the rural communities. Following this, was attempted to assess what has already materialized in terms of touristic activity in such regions and what outcomes were already reported. The main conclusion from this contextualization part was the necessity to wisely choose what type of tourism would benefit the rural regions under study, as it must be based on its characteristics.

As the insights meant to be relevant for Alentejo particularly and following the logic to develop tourism sectors related with the endogenous characteristics of the region, wine

tourism emerged as the topic to be developed next. In this territory, wine is already a prominent trait in the daily life of residents, and wine producers and other entrepreneurs are already adapting to tourism. To fully contextualize the empirical research presented after, there was an effort to understand how wine tourism has developed in Alentejo, identifying the main obstacles and opportunities found. Finally, there is a description of the product itself, its historical background and the justification of the recent interest in it. The exploratory study, where the data collection method used was interviews, aimed to complete the information found in literature regarding the goal set by the research questions.

To answer the first question (1) what the role of Talha wine in the wine tourism panorama is today, it is important to primarily settle how the stakeholders face the development of wine tourism in the territory. The respondents identify Alentejo as having a suitable scenario for tourism activities related with relaxation and nature. Following the importance of the wine sector in the Alentejo, both in culture and economy, wine tourism as well appears as highly important for tourism development in the territory. The endogenous favourable characteristics to the development of high-quality wine tourism, have been noted by international markets. Alentejo has been awarded as a wine destination, as its wines awarded in several wine contests. These distinctions bring attention to the territory and contribute for the good image of Alentejo, positioning it in the minds of potential visitors. A relation between where the awards are conquered and a rise in the respective external market in terms of visitation to the destination was also found. From the producers' perspective, they understand the benefits of participating in the wine tourism phenomenon and provide experiences for visitors and consumers, contributing to the high-quality perception of the overall wine tourism sector. The bond between wine and food is also a major source of visitor's satisfaction, and the interviewed producers enhanced the importance of including regional food products in wine tastings to make them memorable. These benefits extend to small producers, for whom door sales increment is meaningful, as they might not have the attraction capacity of bigger companies but benefit from the general rise of wine tourists flows.

Wine tourism was found to complement and be complemented with other attractive features of Alentejo, of which patrimony and culture stand out. These are important sources for the touristic offer, since the region possesses a vast variety of traditional products which enable co-creation experiences and active participation of visitors in the

daily routines of residents. These types of experiences were already found to be relevant for visitors (Sasu and Epuran, 2016; Loureiro *et al.*, 2019) and the interviews results corroborate exactly that. This also enhances cultural exchange and positive externalities for the territory.

Products such as Talha wine incentive the contact between visitors and several aspects of local culture and its people. Talha wine-based experiences can diversify both the wine tourism offer as well as the partonomy and culture experiences offer once other cultural traits are directly linked and can be further explored by visitors. Some examples are gastronomy, Cante Alentejano, Roman ruins and pottery. These attractions are able to provide an experience with interest points dispersed through the territory and incentive to extend the average length of stay. Moreover, is also a potential theme for events, standing alone, such in the case of the Talha wine competitions, or together with other regional wines and gastronomy products.

Focusing on the demand side, Alentejo attracts diverse visitors' segments, such as families, small groups of friends, big excursions and even solo travellers. Among them, wine tourists appear as an interesting segment of visitors to attract, not only due to their higher expenditure levels and demand for quality service, but also because they usually visit more than one producer, maximizing the distribution of income among the suppliers. These guests can visit the territory simply because they enjoy drinking wine, and in this case, they would not value the cultural context of Talha wine, or to enjoy all facets of the cultural experience, besides the wine tasting. Since Talha wine can be perceived as part of the local culture as well as part of the wine tourism offer, there is a growing tendency of visitors looking for it. Not only from a leisure perspective but as well by students who base their academic education on it.

This product has a seasonal character and, traditionally, it must be consumed directly from the amphora and therefore there was not the option to transport and commercialize it. Since it started to be bottled, the product arrived at the wine market where is it gradually finding it place. The crescent interest in Talha wine reflects in the stakeholders' efforts applied to its communication and preservation. The initiative to apply for UNESCO Intangible Culture Heritage comes from the municipality of Vidigueira, and the project encompasses several intermediate steps that will be beneficial for the producers and the product preservation. Moreover, the existence of the DOC Talha Alentejo allows to

distinguish Talha wine from the recent emerging adulterated version of it, as well as preventing the abusive usage of Talha name.

The wine itself is not considered an innovative product. As the technique used not only is not a novelty, but it must be rigorously followed. It is described as a return to the origin of wine. Despite this, it is innovative in the way that is disruptive to what is the globally accepted wine profile and satisfies a market segment that was unexplored before. The maintenance of the wine making method also implies not to use any of the modern ingredients for chemical intervention of the wine, this leads to a nature based wine which is highly valuable by a segment of consumers looking for non-processed products. Because of its disruptive profile, its acceptance depends on the availability of the consumer to try different wine profiles. This might not always happen due to the strong habitude for wood flavoured wines. From the supply side there is another limitation regarding the available production capacity. Aside from some very recent projects, there are no new amphoras able to produce wine. This implies that only a second hand Talha market is available and the production capacity is fixed, nonetheless, nothing indicates that the available production capacity is fully explored. Currently, the demand for certified Talha wine outstrips the available supply, indicating a situation of undervaluation of the wine in the market. This indicates a growing market segment, with space for a higher number of suppliers or an increase of quantity produced.

The current Talha wine consumer was difficult to characterise and no specific market segment was established. Despite not being widely known nor consumed, it was possible to identify several niche markets interested in it. The first one, emphasized by all interviewees, was the local consumer. These are residents who have lived surrounded by this culture all their life. Some of them are even both domestic producers and consumers. This segment does not represent the most interesting segment for companies. An urban segment of consumers was identified, which further divides accordingly to age and wine knowledge. The younger urban consumer is curious, sensible to trends and looking for nature-based products, with low environmental impact and low chemical intervention. Older consumers usually have a broad experience regarding wine and use this opportunity to further learn on the topic. For these urban consumers, the wine might still be completely unknown or they might have few references of it. When presented, it must be done an explanation exercise to capture their attention and shape their expectation regarding what they are consuming, meaning that further efforts on communication are still needed.

Nevertheless, there are an increasing number of informed visitors who approach producers with intention to experience Talha wine and this was described as a growing phenomenon.

As for the second question (2) what the expectations from stakeholders for the future of Talha wine regarding its touristic potential are, most of the respondents mentioned culture and tradition as competitive advantages in the globalization era, as well as a way to dynamize local economy. Talha wine appears in this panorama as part of the cultural offer able to leverage the tourism sector in Alentejo. Producers defend that the future of Talha wine must be based on production quality and not quantity produced, labelling it as a niche product. In this sense, the UNESCO application gains relevance once it can positively impact the perceived quality of the patrimonial and cultural offer of Alentejo, creating an attraction for visitors and investors. Along with the quality of the cultural experiences, was also mentioned the importance of qualified human resources, particularly in history and language skills, to enhance the quality perception of the destination. A relevant observation regarding the producers of Talha wine is the low average age they present. This was also validated by Interviewee #24, the Talha wine technique and tradition will be preserved since the testimony is fully passed on to the younger generation. Talha wine producers are not only young but also from urban areas, what can be an indicator of attraction of talent to the region.

Despite the positive indicators, some treats must be considered, being the most mentioned one is the appearance of altered Talha wine which entails the abusive usage of Talha name and jeopardizes the authenticity of Talha wine. The alterations made to the traditional technique also allow to lower productions costs which leads to disloyal competition. The solution for this problem requires the intervention of regulatory entities and the establishment of detailed regulation for Talha wine production.

The future of the wine touristic offer of Alentejo was also discussed and the most consensual point was the need for cooperation in order to enable the assembling of a complete and customizable product for visitors. These integrated offers must include partnerships among different business lines but also in between wineries since most wine tourists wishes to visit more than one producer. For the future is important to focus on convenience and find mechanisms to eliminate negative cues for visitors. Another improvement point for reflection is the need for accommodation options, as outside the

main cities, there are not enough accommodation offer to face peak seasons. To value these locations, responsible entities must enhance the attractiveness of the territory for bigger companies to invest and operate in Alentejo, dynamizing the sector. How the sector should be dynamized represented a fracturing topic. Massification is faced with both apprehension and enthusiasm. If in one hand, high capacity accommodation is what is missing to increase the numbers of groups and excursions, assuming this is a way to homogenize the economic development among regions. From the other perspective, there is fear for the loss of life quality and endogenous characteristics such as the natural landscape and tranquillity. These characteristics are another attractiveness trait that are increasingly important for visitors when choosing a destination. The relaxation allowed by the low urbanization of Alentejo is something desired by urban population due to the stress of their daily lives. More recent events, namely the pandemic of 2020, enhanced the opportunity represented by this characteristic once public health and low population density are now priorities when choosing a destination and Alentejo can affirm to be a safe territory in this regard.

All the above considered, is plausible to conclude Talha wine represents a growing segment, with increasing interest from both demand and supply sides. Potential is held not only by the product itself but also by the integrated experiences it allows with other cultural facets, sometimes involving different territory points. The history of the Talha wine technique is also a source of interest for the region as it arouses curiosity whenever mentioned, bringing attention to other regional gems and stimulating visitation. As many other identity features, Talha wine can be useful to differentiate the territory and attract visitors, consumers for other regional products and investors' attention for the opportunities emerging at the destination. In the future, Talha wine is expected to expand its market segment base, as it becomes more and more recognized in the market, both nationwide and internationally. Considering the inescapable production limitations such as the handmade character and limited number of amphoras dictate its destiny as a niche product. This also implies it will never be the main protagonist of the Alentejo wine production nor the main vehicle for the wine tourism development. Nevertheless, it can be a highly valuable complement, enriched with its history and artisanal character, attracting the most informed and interested types of wine tourists. Its differentiatonal character can serve both wine and cultural tourism and would be more valuable if advertised as an experience rather than another wine available in the market.

5.2. Managerial implications

The current dissertation provides useful insights for wine producers involved with wine tourism and touristic animation companies providing wine and/or cultural experiences. In general, wine producers apply widely the strategy of distinguished their wines in the market by reflecting the terroir under which the wine is produced. Talha wine technique reflects centuries of history in what concerns wine production in Alentejo, it is even presented as the origin of wine. As it is important to enhance the region and sub region of origin of the wines, to communicate the territory by telling engaging stories such as the one of Talha wine.

There are different types of Talha wine producers, and when considering the cultural experience associated with it, all are important to the authenticity of the experiences. The households which still produce Talha wine for self-consumption are a real expression of tradition, as these are the most typical Talha wine cellars. At this production level the wine is not bottled nor sold, and the amounts produced are not significant in the Alentejo's total wine production, but it presents a cultural value able to be enhanced. Producers with commercialization capacities can be divided in two. Wineries which produce exclusively Talha wine, this kind of cellars are appearing dispersed through Alentejo, and are many times related with the revival of family heritage being dynamized by the younger generations. Unlike the other production modality, this is a growing phenomenon. As for wineries with wider portfolios, such as Alentejo's wine production main players, Talha wine is faced as a strategical product, allowing them to create engaging contents based on history. These well stabilised companies are increasing their Talha wine communication by participating and promoting events and wine fairs for the purpose.

Regarding the demand side, Wine tourists are an interesting segment of visitors to attract, not only due to their higher expenditure levels and demand for quality service, but also because they usually visit more than one producer. To maximize this phenomenon and the guest satisfaction, is on the best interests of producers to organize and offer complete experiences with partnerships to eliminate the negative cues of doing a route themselves. To be responsible for their own route can lead to dissatisfaction due to the lack of consistency of the information provided by each producer. To streamline this process, official specialized organizations such as Alentejo Wine Route must function properly

and proactively provide this service to visitors. It is also important that producers align their interests and provide reliable and accurate information to guarantee the best experience possible. Despite the obvious need for coordination, this appears to be a major issue in this sector and can be highlighted as a point to improve. An intriguing offer also appears to be desired by many stakeholders as this could lead to a better distribution of wealth and more general prosperity of the region. Partnerships among different business lines were already established and reported as beneficial for the involved parties. It is usual that visitors ask for recommendations from one place to others, and with this scenario these networks are even more relevant. Nonetheless, partnerships among wine producers seem to be almost non-existing, and these represent an unexplored opportunity.

The last topic to be addressed is the uncertainty caused by the pandemic. This immersed the tourism sector in deep uncertainty with no visitors and no business operating. From this crisis it is important to learn to adapt a new normal that might impact permanently the way people choose destinations for holidays. In such time, the best practice for destinations like Alentejo, with low population density and low levels of urbanization, is to reinvent the destination image and seize the opportunity to transmit a feeling of safety and tranquilization.

5.3. Limitations

The present study was able to present relevant insights on the role of Talha wine in wine tourism in Alentejo, as well as on the stakeholders' expectations regarding the future of the wine tourism offer and the product itself. Despite the success in accomplishing its main purpose, some limitations should be considered.

The first and most impacting one was the international context during which the study was conducted. The interviews were collected between March and April of 2020, during the pandemic outbreak of Covid-19, and the declared national emergency state which lasted from March 18th until the 2nd of May. This prevented the investigator from visiting the territory and personally collecting the interviews. Once the research was based on qualitative data, the intent would be to perform a dynamic and organic exploratory study, visiting from big producers to family cellars, restaurants and wine shops, directly contacting with stakeholders. Moreover, this situation also impacted the answers given by stakeholders, as the uncertainty environment was impossible to overcome and had a

severe negative impact in the expectations for the future, particularly for the wine tourism industry.

The second limitation faced was the reduced number of respondents available to participate in the exploratory study. This was already expected as it is understandable that stakeholders find their time consumed by their usual activity and were adapting to the new unconventional working conditions imposed by the pandemic situation. Despite the difficulty in gathering sufficient participants, contacts were constantly made and the interviews time frame was extended, until the saturation point was achieved.

The third limitation were the stakeholders who were not considered. The present study focused in gathering the points of view from producers and other entities which act as facilitators in the development of such product and related wine tourism activities. Family cellars owners, restoration entrepreneurs, wine distributors, guests and consumers, despite often mentioned and broadly discussed, were not included. Therefore, the present conclusions do not reflect all the relevant points of view.

5.4. Future research

Considering the above-mentioned limitations to the study, a set of prepositions for further research can be assembled. It is also important to established that none of the limitations is insurmountable. The first limitation, regarding the pandemic situation lived, impacted the current results. For this reason, would be interesting to repeat the process to evaluate the differences in the future perceptions of the stakeholders in a more favourable international context.

To overcome the remaining limitations, would be necessary to open the discussion to a broader number of stakeholders, mainly guests and consumers. The number of participants would consequentially rise and enable the analysis on trends in both the wine tourism development in Alentejo and in the Talha wine market. Specially, as the interested marked segment is not currently defined, further market research is necessary to identify the potential consumers. This would allow a 360° view of the product, collecting further meaningful insights.

Throughout the present research, different varieties of amphora wines were mentioned by the interviewees and the literature. This can also open the possibility to research and compare the performance of other regions with similar productions and the respective products. From this research could emerge the identification of potential competing destinations and insights on how to gain competitive advantages.

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7. Appendices

7.1. Appendix 1: Demographic Questionnaires

Table 3 Demographic Questionnaires

<p>Interview #1: Direção Regional da Cultura do Alentejo</p> <p>Anonimato: Não</p> <p>Género: Masculino</p> <p>Idade: 60</p> <p>Habilitações literárias: Mestrado</p> <p>Posição na organização: Técnico Superior</p> <p>Concelho de residência: Évora</p>	<p>Interview #14: Herdade do Rocim</p> <p>Anonimato: Não</p> <p>Género: Masculino</p> <p>Idade: 37</p> <p>Habilitações literárias: Licenciatura e Pós-Graduação</p> <p>Posição na organização: Export Manager</p> <p>Concelho de residência: Lisboa</p>
<p>Interview #2: Abegoaria</p> <p>Anonimato: Não</p> <p>Género: Masculino</p> <p>Idade: 43</p> <p>Habilitações literárias: Licenciatura</p> <p>Posição na organização: Diretor de Exportações</p> <p>Concelho de residência: Setúbal</p>	<p>Interview #15: Herdade do Rocim</p> <p>Anonimato: Não</p> <p>Género: Masculino</p> <p>Idade: 40</p> <p>Habilitações literárias: Licenciatura</p> <p>Posição na organização: Diretor Geral e Enólogo</p> <p>Concelho de residência: Beja</p>
<p>Interview #3: Vinhos do Alentejo</p>	<p>Interview #16: Turismo do Alentejo</p>

Talha Wine as a Differentiation Factor of Alentejo's Wine Tourism Offer

<p>Anonimato: Não Género: Masculino Idade: 44 Habilitações literárias: Engenheiro Agrónomo Posição na organização: Diretor de Marketing Concelho de residência: Évora</p>	<p>Anonimato: Não Género: Feminino Idade: 51 Habilitações literárias: Licenciada Posição na organização: Técnica Superior Concelho de residência: Vidigueira</p>
<p>Interview #4 Anonimato: Sim Género: Feminino Idade: n.a Habilitações literárias: n.a Posição na organização: Não Aplicável Concelho de residência: Vidigueira</p>	<p>Interview #17: Quinta das Ratoeiras Anonimato: Não Género: Masculino Idade: 70 Habilitações literárias: Licenciado e Pós-Graduação Posição na organização: Diretor Geral Concelho de residência: Vidigueira</p>
<p>Interview #5: Herdade dos Outeiros Altos Género: Masculino Idade: 47 Habilitações literárias: Engenheiro Agrónomo Posição na organização: Manager Concelho de residência: Oeiras</p>	<p>Interview #18: Cearte Anonimato: Não Género: Masculino Idade: 57 anos Habilitações literárias: Licenciatura Posição na organização: Coordenador do Gabinete para a Promoção das Artes e Ofícios</p>

Talha Wine as a Differentiation Factor of Alentejo's Wine Tourism Offer

	Concelho de residência: Coimbra
<p>Interview #6</p> <p>Anonimato: Sim</p> <p>Género: Masculino</p> <p>Idade: 63</p> <p>Habilitações literárias: Formado em ciências da fermentação</p> <p>Posição na organização: Vice-presidente</p> <p>Concelho de residência: Setúbal</p>	<p>Interview #19 Adega José de Sousa, José Maria da Fonseca</p> <p>Anonimato: Não</p> <p>Género: Feminino</p> <p>Idade: 37</p> <p>Habilitações literárias: Licenciatura</p> <p>Posição na organização: Coordenadora de Enoturismo</p> <p>Concelho de residência: Portel</p>
<p>Interview #7: Wine Pundit</p> <p>Anonimato: Não</p> <p>Género: Masculino</p> <p>Idade: 52</p> <p>Habilitações literárias: Doutoramento</p> <p>Posição na organização: Fundador e CEO</p> <p>Concelho de residência: Lisboa</p>	<p>Interview #20</p> <p>Anonimato: Sim</p> <p>Género: Feminino</p> <p>Idade: 35</p> <p>Habilitações literárias: Licenciatura</p> <p>Posição na organização: Apoio à produção</p> <p>Concelho de residência: Moura</p>
<p>Interview #8: Instituto Superior de Agronomia</p> <p>Anonimato: Não</p> <p>Género: Masculino</p> <p>Idade: 69</p> <p>Habilitações literárias: Doutoramento</p>	<p>Interview #21: Sovibor</p> <p>Anonimato: Não</p> <p>Género: Feminino</p> <p>Idade: 28</p> <p>Habilitações literárias: Licenciatura e Pós-Graduação</p>

Talha Wine as a Differentiation Factor of Alentejo's Wine Tourism Offer

<p>Posição na organização: Professor Reformado Concelho de residência: Lisboa</p>	<p>Posição na organização: Enóloga Concelho de residência: Borba</p>
<p>Interview #9: Adega Marel Anonimato: Não Género: Masculino Idade: 37 Habilitações literárias: Licenciatura Eng. Agronómica - Especialização Viticultura e Enologia; Pós-Graduação em Wine- Business Posição na organização: Enólogo Concelho de residência: Carregal do Sal lisboa</p>	<p>Interview #22 Anonimato: Sim Género: Feminino Idade: 45 Habilitações literárias: Licenciatura Posição na organização: Diretora de enologia Concelho de residência: Évora</p>
<p>Interview #10: Câmara Municipal de Vidigueira Anonimato: Não Género: Feminino Idade: 46 Habilitações literárias: Mestrado Posição na organização: Técnica superior Concelho de residência: Vidigueira</p>	<p>Interview #23: Caminhos de Frades Anonimato: Não Género: Feminino Idade: 56 Habilitações literárias: Licenciatura e Pós-Graduação Posição na organização: Administradora Concelho de residência: Vidigueira</p>
<p>Interview #11: Adega de Borba Anonimato: Não</p>	<p>Interview #24: Câmara Municipal de Vidigueira Anonimato: Não</p>

Talha Wine as a Differentiation Factor of Alentejo's Wine Tourism Offer

<p>Género: Feminino Idade: 31 Habilitações literárias: Licenciatura Posição na organização: Diretora de Marketing Concelho de residência: Vila Viçosa</p>	<p>Género: Feminino Idade: 40 Habilitações literárias: Mestrado Posição na organização: Adjunta do gabinete de apoio ao executivo Concelho de residência: Vidigueira</p>
<p>Interview #12: XXVI Talhas Anonimato: Não Género: Masculino Idade: 35 Habilitações literárias: Mestrado Posição na organização: Sócio Concelho de residência: Lisboa</p>	<p>Interview #25: Spira Anonimato: Não Género: Feminino Idade: 43 Habilitações literárias: Doutoramento Posição na organização: Diretora Geral Concelho de residência: Alvito</p>
<p>Interview #13: Câmara Municipal de Aljustrel Anonimato: Não Género: Masculino Idade: 62 Habilitações literárias: Licenciatura e Pós-Graduação Posição na organização: Técnico Superior Concelho de residência: Castro Verde</p>	<p>Interview #26: Câmara Municipal de Serpa Anonimato: Não Género: Feminino Idade: 43 Habilitações literárias: Licenciatura Posição na organização: Técnica Superior Concelho de residência: Serpa</p>

Source: Own Elaboration