

Visiting a *furancho*: local lifestyles as drivers of (food) tourism transformation

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Abstract

Purpose – This research analyses the relationships between local foodscapes and tourism futures departing from *furanchos* as examples of a rural Spanish's authentic food tradition which reveals the transformative power of local foods and culinary practices in tourism.

Design/methodology/approach – Using a narrative inquiry, the qualitative case study is based on ten semi-structured interviews with local owners of *furanchos* in the Spanish region of Galicia.

Findings – Results show the key characteristics of *furanchos*, and their potential for sustainable food production and consumption. The regulatory framework and its close connection with the environment are the reasons why they provide transformative (food) tourism experiences.

Originality/value – Drawing from the preservation of a culinary culture, the future of food tourism will not only improve the sustainability of food systems and supply chains, but also the understanding of genuine foods and practices that represent people and places.

Keywords Culinary culture, Food tourism, Galicia, Gastronomy, Rural development, Spain

Paper type Viewpoint

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Introduction and objective

Every aspect of travel is about human beings encountering other human beings while moving from home to a foreign place in order to have an experience. As it's all about people meeting, serving, taking care of, and entertaining other people, the primary unit of activity is a relationship not a transaction (Pollock, 2012, p. 8).

Food tourism is a niche form of tourism that allows travelers to discover a “place” through food (Fusté-Forné and Berno, 2016) – which includes the gathering of knowledge about a culture, a landscape and a group of people through culinary heritages. During the last decades, food tourism experiences have rapidly increased their presence in destination management and marketing (Ellis *et al.*, 2018), and its role in tourism futures is anticipated to be crucial because of the meaningful connection of food to nature. According to Fountain (2021), “food provides a context to learn – new skills, new flavours, and new cultural understandings – and to pass on those skills to younger generations” (p. 9). This research focuses on food tourism as an example of a niche form of tourism, and it is particularly interested in the role of *furanchos* in tourism transformation.

The case study that informs this viewpoint discusses the sustainability of *furanchos* and the potentials for the future in the context of a local turn in tourism (Higgins-Desbiolles and Bigby, 2022). A *furancho* is a private home which is also used as a food establishment where the owners sell their artisanal wine surplus and prepare handmade food in an intimate shared space between “hosts” and “guests”. Niche tourism experiences are a driver of change in the framework of transformative tourism (Soulard *et al.*, 2019; Teoh *et al.*, 2021). Previous research acknowledges that a co-created tourism experience (Duxbury *et al.*, 2021) leads to co-transformative learning (Pritchard *et al.*, 2011), and visiting a *furancho* emerges as a hopeful practice in regenerative tourism.

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Transformative tourism futures through food experiences

As it was stated a decade ago, “we live in sharply transitional times which may well prove to be one of generational economic and social change during which people, communities and places will need to find alternative ways of living and working” (Morgan *et al.*, 2011, p. 3). Post-pandemic tourism requires a regenerative approach with alternative economic practices (Cave and Dredge, 2020; Sheldon, 2021). Regenerative tourism prioritizes communities and places (Bellato and Cheer, 2021) with a close relationship between people and nature (Hes and Du Plessis, 2014; Hussain and Haley, 2022; Richardson and Insch, 2021). Transformative tourism emerges as an avenue to understand how we travel and provide a path to hopeful tourism practices (Ateljevic, 2020). According to Živoder *et al.* (2015), transformative tourism aims to *reshape the tourist* and engage her/him with a *new* experience that “is part of the awakening of consciousness, and creates more self-awareness, more self-inquiry into the purpose of life, living by a higher set of values, and making greater contributions to others” (Sheldon, 2020, p. 2).

Pung and Chiappa (2020) have analyzed the factors that facilitate transformative tourism experiences. They found that a close interaction between hosts and guests and a first-hand experience of sense of place are transformation facilitators. In a similar vein, Leer (2020) affirms that the future food experience must focus on the participative role of tourists and the genuineness of local landscapes. However, to change tourists’ minds, we also need to change tourism systems. Pollock (2012) states that “change will come from a collective effort conducted at the grassroots – in communities where tourism hosts commit to ensuring that their economic activity benefits all stakeholders; where they take responsibility for minimizing the environmental footprint and work actively to ensure that local cultural values are maintained and, in some cases, rejuvenated” (p. 3). Several examples of food-based experiences illustrate what we understand as “food tourism”. Food tourism activities include visitation to farms, markets or restaurants, to cite some examples. According to Fountain (2021), there is a need to “integrate more broadly the role of food within the culture, lifestyle and environment of a community” (p. 3). This research adds texture to this conversation from the unique case of *furanchos*.

Method

This viewpoint aims to understand *how* and *why* a (food) tourism experience offers hope for tourism futures. Using a narrative inquiry, this qualitative case study is based on ten interviews with owners of *furanchos* in the Spanish region of Galicia. The interviewees were selected based on a non-probability convenience sampling in the Galician area of Rías Baixas, Pontevedra. The interviews were carried out between the months of January and April 2021, and they lasted an average time of 30 min. The interviews were transcribed, and a thematic analysis was conducted to identify the key regenerative characteristics of *furanchos*.

A limited (food) tourism experience that respects the nature

When you visit a *furancho*, the flavors from the Earth create a local experience which relies on “natural” and “cultural” idiosyncrasies and reveal how and why traditional *regenerative* lifestyles can bring hopeful tourism practices that protect local communities and ecosystems, and promote a responsible production and consumption of food. There is a strict legal regulation of the dishes that can be served in a *furancho*. According to the Decree 215/2012 of October 31, the allowed dishes are limited to table of sausages-cheeses; peppers, Padrón variety; ear-chorizo; zorza-loin; rib meat; fried eggs; grilled sardines or mackerels; tripe with chickpeas or beans; potato omelet; pies-empañadillas and croquettes. Each *furancho* must only choose five dishes, which shows a first difference between *furanchos* and mainstream restaurants. Also, the law establishes that *furanchos* can only be opened a total of three months per year, and never in summer. This is because a *furancho* can only operate in the context of artisanal wine production. While this posits challenges on the owners, it helps to preserve the identity of these places whose primary objective relies on the agricultural activity.

A *furancho* is a place that encapsulates the identity and tradition of rural areas of Galicia. The close relationship with customers, their family atmosphere and the fact that everything is prepared at

home define the genuineness of the *furanchos*. A *furancho* is not positioned as an establishment with a capitalist orientation but as a concept that arises from the harmonious relationship with the territory. Consequently, *furanchos* are an example of a transformative tourism experience which look at the future with a combination of optimism and fear. Some of the interviewees believe that the legal limitations may cause the tradition of *furanchos* to end up disappearing. Also, most of the owners are elderly people. This is a problem in Spanish rural areas for the preservation of primary activities that rely on the natural resources. In this sense, young people are not appealed by agricultural activities with hard conditions and unpredictable working hours. This is an aspect that must be considered in the future planning and development of *furanchos*.

Furanchos do not only represent a form of sustainable production and consumption, but also a tradition that shows a profound respect for food with a local base. A *furancho* is a space that protects and promotes a sense of hospitality and awards value to the landscape (the own wine is produced in the surroundings) and the lifestyle (traditional elaborations with local products are made available to the customers) that jointly communicate the sense of place of rural Galicia with a devoted attention to the sustainability of local resources. Departing from an artisanal wine production and handmade menus, the *furanchos*' stories reveal the connection between the foods and the way of cultivating, manipulating or consuming. This is valorized in food tourism experiences in *furanchos*, managed by local people where visitors can taste a part of the Galician tradition, and eat and drink products that have their origin in the same place where they are consumed. These factors increase the relationship between people and the environment as a pivotal driver of tourism transformation.

Conclusion

The transformation of food tourism activities must rely on the historical wisdom of local people: learning culinary methods and recipes or exploring foods available in wilderness, are examples which facilitate regenerative (food) tourism experiences. In a post-pandemic context, a growing attention is paid to peripheral destinations such as rural Spain. The [World Tourism Organization \(2012\)](#) states that tourists are paying a growing attention to the origin of local products in the context of healthier lifestyles. Also, the preservation of local culinary traditions has been gaining an increasing attention in the last decades, both from the academia and the industry. This research contributes to it generating novel knowledge based on *furanchos*. First, *furanchos* are regulated by the law. Second, *furanchos* are a form of tourism close to agrotourism and community homestay tourism. Third, the motto of *furanchos* is based on local products, produced by the owners and part of the Galician tradition embedded in rural gastronomy.

Results of this research show that *furanchos* contribute to the preservation of tradition, and they express a unique identity that becomes a factor of regenerative tourism attraction (see [Fusté-Forné and Hussain, 2021](#)). *Furanchos* are gastronomic premises created to sell the wine surplus instead of waste it. In this sense, visiting a *furancho* shows the directions for a future-oriented food tourism. As outlined by [Fountain \(2021\)](#), this is based on three pillars: "food for well-being," "getting back to basics" and "valuing local and locals." The discovery of sense of place and the local lifestyles increases awareness and consciousness of visitors, and provides a higher level of place attachment ([Pung and Chiappa, 2020](#)). This is gathered through a close interaction with locals – in a *furancho*, the owner is usually the farmer, the winegrower and the cook, with an extraordinary local expertise knowledge and skills. Future studies must also analyze the demand perspective to understand to what extent transformative (food) tourism experiences lead to *real* change ([Soulard et al., 2021](#)) in tourism systems.

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