



Gastronomy tourism: A look at Benedictine monastic products in Europe

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ARTICLE INFO

Keywords:

Monasteries
Gastronomic tourism
Monastic products
Benedictine rule

ABSTRACT

This research aims to scrutinize, from a tourist perspective, the enhancement of gastronomic offerings produced in Benedictine monasteries. The methodology is divided into two distinct phases. The initial phase entails an analysis of the web pages and the selection of monasteries that produce wine and gastronomic products, which totals 39 monasteries. Subsequently, interviews and question-and-answer forms were conducted at the selected monasteries, yielding a total of 13 responses. The monasteries that answered the questions also underwent a thorough examination of their daily operations, their online presence, the natural world, and their popular tourist spots. Among the many gastronomic products found are wine, liqueurs, beer, grappa, and cider, as well as food products such as olive oil, cheese, mustard, honey, and chocolate. In the majority of the monasteries examined, products are still being produced as a result of their monastic tradition and Benedictine lifestyle. The promotion and sale of these products serve as a source of revenue that is utilized for the upkeep, continuity, and preservation of the abbeys.

1. Introduction

Religious heritage is an important part of today's Europe. According to [FRH \(2023\)](#), Europe boasts a staggering number of over 500,000 churches, chapels, synagogues, mosques, and other similar structures that are subject to diverse challenges, including their preservation. Many of these buildings are notable for their architectural, historical, artistic, and spiritual importance ([Viñals and López-González, 2022](#)). The Prerico initiative of ICOMOS, which is a section dedicated to religious elements and sacred spaces, and the [European Parliament \(2015\)](#) recognize religious heritage as an important part of Europe's heritage.

In this particular context, monasteries have assumed a pivotal role in the characterization of medieval Europe, assuming crucial roles in numerous domains, including culture (as study centers) and agriculture (as landowners, and in certain instances, as advocates of agrarian innovations). Numerous monasteries were established along the pilgrimage routes that traversed Europe during that period, thereby establishing the foundations of contemporary Europe. For instance, the Camino de Santiago is regarded as one of the initial structuring elements of the former continent, and numerous monasteries were established in its vicinity to accommodate pilgrims ([Lois González, 2013](#)).

The Order of St. Benedict was one of the largest in Europe during the Middle Ages. Their monasteries were scattered throughout the continent, and in their surroundings, a new society was formed with its

political, economic, cultural, and religious aspects. In 1964, Saint Benedict of Nursia was declared the patron saint of Europe, through the apostolic letter "Pacis Nuntius". It is not a coincidence that Saint Benedict was also designated by Pope Paul VI "as the messenger of peace, bringer of union, and teacher of civilization".

Hence, the legacy of the monasteries encompasses not only the material aspects, but also the cultural, social, and spiritual aspects. The preservation of tangible heritage is frequently the primary focus, neglecting the preservation of intangible heritage. Throughout the course of history, monasteries have also cherished a legacy in the form of literary works, culinary recipes, customs, and rituals, which is often overlooked by scholars ([Aulet et al., 2017](#)). The culinary heritage or monastic gastronomic products, which were initially produced in monasteries, are currently, in some instances, at risk ([Ramírez-Gutiérrez, 2023](#); [Paquier, 2019](#)). For this reason, the present study aims to examine the present state of gastronomic products produced in monasteries, with a particular emphasis on the orders that adhere to the Benedictine Rule, namely the Benedictines, Cistercians, Trappists, and Camaldolese.

In compliance with what its rule indicates, that manual work is part of the daily life of the community, "idleness is the enemy of the soul; that is why the brothers must occupy themselves at some times in manual work and at other times in divine reading" ([St. Benedict, 48:1](#)). One of the secondary objectives is to identify which products continue to be produced and

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how they are sold, to determine or explore the potential that these gastronomic products have and the impact they generate on the monasteries, not only at an economic level.

The article has been divided into three sections. In the section devoted to the literature review, the theoretical framework is presented, analyzing the connections that arise between the concepts of monasteries, tangible and intangible heritage, gastronomy, and tourism. The next section presents the methodology, followed by the presentation of the results and discussion.

2. Literature review

2.1. Monastic communities: between monks and monasteries

The word “monastery” comes from Greek and means “house of a single person”, because originally, they were small cells inhabited by a single monk who retired to a remote area to do prayer and penance. The first monastic communities were established between the third and fourth centuries, following the model of eremitic life proposed by Saint Pacomi (Estradé, 1998). Saint Augustine in the 5th century helped spread Christianity (Howie, 1969) and, approximately, a century later, the Benedictine monasticism movement started. Saint Benedict (480 aC, Umbria, Italy) studied in Rome but found urban life unsatisfying. Seeking spirituality, he became a hermit at Sacro Speco in Subiaco, dedicating himself to God through prayer and contemplation. He established his first monastic foundation in Montecassino in 529, thereby establishing the order of St. Benedict (de Vogue, 1999). He established a precedent in medieval times for the Catholic religion, being considered the patriarch of Western monasticism (Lawrence, 2015).

His most significant legacy is the Benedictine Rule, which spans 73 chapters and is summed up in its main motto, “Ora et Labora.” Saint Benedict regarded it as an epilogue, aimed at novices in the spiritual life (St. Benedict, 73). Fernández Dueñas (2016) views it as a fundamental book of medieval coexistence, while Magno (1990) identifies it as a discreet and lucid rule for monks. The rule is renowned for its balance, practicality, and its foundation on poverty, chastity, obedience, prayer, and work (Rey Castelao, 2009). The fabled rule gained such acclaim during the Middle Ages that even Emperor Charlemagne imposed it on all monasteries and religious communities to promote the sanctity of customs and study (Masoliver, 1994).

Notwithstanding this, the significance of the Benedictine order shifted in the 10th century with the emergence of the Cluniac order. While adhering to Benedictine doctrine, Cluny emphasized prayer over manual labor, which was carried out by lay members. After Cluny's decline, various religious orders would emerge, including the Cistercian and Trappist orders, also influenced by Saint Benedict. In 1908, Roberto Molesmes founded the Cistercian order, aiming at restoring the original spirit of the Benedictine order by ensuring strict compliance with the rule and resuming monastic asceticism and manual tasks (Muñoz, 2021). The Cistercians, known as “white monks” for their attire, and as “Bernard monks” after Saint Bernard of Clairvaux, their leading figure, prioritized spiritual guidance (Duby, 1976).

The medieval monasteries were, in general, intended to be a place for God to dwell; therefore, “if possible, the monastery should be constructed to include everything necessary, such as water, a mill, a garden, and that the various arts should be practiced in the monastery, so that the monks have no need to be out of doors, as it is not good for their souls.” (Benito Durán, 1990: 193). The monastic establishment complied with the requirements of the monastic communities, considering their bodily, mental, spiritual, and communal requirements (de Aguirre, 1992). In the physical domain, they provided a place to eat (the refectory) because Saint Benedict made clear rules about what, when, and how one should eat (Zardoya, 2011). Due to this reason, the monasteries also possessed land that provided the monks with the essential sustenance (Sawicki, 2017; Beltrán Peralta et al., 2022). In terms of the

cultural realm, the library was a crucial component of the monastery, as numerous monks devoted numerous hours to the study of texts and scrolls (Peterson, 2010; Clark, 2014). It is evident that the spiritual component consisted of time devoted to prayer, both individually and collectively, and the primary venue was the church (Rosenwein and Little, 1974; Merton, 2018). The tenets of Saint Benedict also advocated hospitality and charitable acts, resulting in the provision of facilities to accommodate individuals ranging from pilgrims to the ill (Fortin, 2003; O’Gorman, 2006).

2.2. Monastic heritage, tangible and intangible

The legacy of the Benedictine monasteries constitutes a significant component of the cultural heritage of Europe (Clark, 2014). The concept of heritage emerged in France post-Industrial Revolution, initially focusing on safeguarding artistic creations and later incorporating antiquity as societies recognized the need to protect their historical legacy (Choay, 2019). Throughout the 19th century, heritage played a crucial role in shaping national narratives and identities (Van Geert et al., 2016), transitioning from an elitist concern to a vital political issue for liberal governments in Europe (Ventosa, 1993). By the early 20th century, European regulations acknowledged the social and educational value of heritage for society as a whole (Peñalba, 2005). The heritage devastation during World War II encouraged organizations like UNESCO and ICOMOS to take measures for preservation (Peñalba, 2005), reflected in documents like the Venice Charter (1964). The concept of cultural good expanded over time to encompass not only historical and artistic landmarks but also folkloric, bibliographic, and documentary elements, recognizing their broader significance beyond historical or aesthetic value (Prats, 1997). Over the past thirty years, heritage has evolved as a social construct, encompassing a wider range of elements (Konsa, 2013) evolving to concepts like cultural landscape, including the interrelationship between culture and nature (Bouchenaki, 2003). This evolution includes intangible elements like cultural traditions or recipe books, which play a crucial role in understanding heritage as a complex ensemble of interconnected manifestations (Scovazzi, 2015; Munjeri, 2004; Ruggles and Silverman, 2009).

Similarly, the notion of heritage preservation and management has also evolved. A recent concept that has been implemented in the domain of heritage management and conservation is that of values-based conservation, which has been promoted, particularly after the approval of the Burra Charter (ICOMOS). Heritage values cover various factors like aesthetics, history, architecture, economics, politics, and more, influenced by subjective perspectives of different groups. Historical values are frequently associated with the legacy of ancestors and aid in generating a sense of relevance and rootedness that aids in generating a sense of place and linking local communities to the genius loci (Timothy, 2018). On the contrary, contemporary values are intertwined with economic factors, leisure and educational prospects, well-being, and the environment (Avrami et al., 2019). The consideration of diverse heritage values in management and narrative necessitates the departure of numerous experts, professionals, and politicians from their comfort zones (Timothy and Boyd, 2006; Vakhitova, 2015). The selection of preservation measures and their implementation are guided by methodologies that are closely linked to the architectural and monumental principles of management organizations. Frequently, local communities are not incorporated in the decision-making process or the narrative construction. In the case of monasteries that are still in use by monastic communities, the task of preservation must be aligned with their usage and consider a potential evolution, rendering it challenging to establish protection regulations and deliberate on the notion of acceptable change (Poulios, 2014; Bell, 2015).

The notion of heritage values has played a pivotal role lately in guiding decisions and legitimizing actions taken by various entities involved in heritage preservation and management (Poulios, 2014) as seen in examples such as the historic district of Old Québec (Dormael, 2014).

2016) or the city of Urbino (Del Baldo and Demartini, 2021). There are comparatively few studies about monasteries, and the majority of them focus on architectural and monumental values, as shown in the works of Irvine (2011), Martins and Carlos (2016) and Lens et al. (2013), to mention some. Few of them focus on intangible and spiritual values (Lens et al., 2013; Gilchrist, 2020). Some studies focusing on monastic products can be found, providing insights of the variety of products elaborated within the monastic tradition and valuing them as part of their legacy (Zardoya, 2011; Foli, 2021; Afferni and Ferrario, 2018) and also as an important element for the economic maintenance of the monastic communities (Molina-Liñán, et al., 2020).

2.3. Monastic culinary heritage and tourism

Monasteries may be viewed as incarnations of the notion of a sacred site and are intimately linked to the natural environment in which they are situated. They show how culture and nature, tangible and intangible, are intertwined: buildings are built to meet specific demands related to the community's day-to-day existence, including religious ones while retaining symbolic nuances (Aulet et al., 2017). The strong attractiveness of monasteries is due to the diverse values they hold regarding worship, the environment, art, and architecture, among others. The tangible elements represent various aspects of the sacred site, encompassing monuments and structures such as the church, monastery dependencies, and other infrastructures such as cellars, farms, or workshops, as well as artifacts such as paintings, altarpieces, decorations, and liturgical items. This implies a fervent inclination towards the fields of art, architecture, and general history, which can be attributed to primarily secular motives and are closely associated with cultural tourism (Liberato et al., 2022; Richards, 2021). The intangible religious legacy, on the other hand, encompasses the rituals and religious celebrations that transpire at sacred locations. The devotion of people to a particular element is reflected in this, and their visits can be correlated with religious journeys and pilgrimages (Aulet and Vidal, 2018; Shinde, 2021).

Gastronomy is a good example of the interconnectedness of tangible and intangible heritage and natural surroundings. In the monastic manual work, agricultural activities were prominently observed; the land is cultivated and essential foods are harvested, including wheat, rice, olive trees, fruits, grapes for wine production, and vegetables, among others. Although food production was a fundamental part of the activity in the monastic communities, it was not so much for their nutrition since their diet was based mainly on vegetables and little meat, "there is nothing more contrary to the Christian faith than excess in food" (St. Benedict, 39,1). Wine and oil, which are prevalent in the Mediterranean diet, were produced for liturgical purposes in the monasteries. A portion of the food production was not solely intended for self-consumption but also represented the wealth of each monastery and was utilized as currency (Berman, 1986). This has led to the culinary arts becoming a distinctive characteristic of numerous monasteries.

3. Methodology

Data triangulation and netnography are the methodologies used for this case study. Data Triangulation means that different ways of collecting and analysing data are used together to get closer to what is being studied (Denzin, 1970). As per Oppermann (2000), the triangulation technique enables the resolution of research inquiries by utilizing diverse scopes and depths, thereby facilitating potential scientific advancement. Hence, in this investigation, both quantitative and qualitative techniques, along with a systematic examination of web pages, were employed. The interpretation and construction of results subjected to triangulation strategies can be stronger than those that have been subjected to a single method (Donolo, 2009).

Netnography has different methods and techniques that allow the analysis of the information that exists in the different aspects of the web,

such as digital media, and portals web, among others, they first collect data, then filter and analyze them, and only keep the data they need for the research. Kozinets and Gretzel (2024, p. 60) describes netnography as "participant-observational research based in online fieldwork"; in this case study, the websites were analyzed to find out which monasteries existed in these monastic orders, and then these were filtered to select only those that met the parameters of this research.

The data search was conducted in two phases. Initially, the information obtained from the official web portals of the religious orders was investigated, specifically Benedictine (OSB International, n.d.), Cister (Ordo Cistercensis, 2023), Trapa (Ordre Cistercian of the Strict Observance-OCSO, 2023), and Camaldula (Comunità Monastica di Camaldoli, 2022). The systematic study of the websites of the international entities that govern the selected monastic order allowed the authors to know that today there are 266 active monasteries, of which 80 are Benedictines, 91 belong to the Cistercian order, 84 are Trappists, 11 are part of the Camaldula order. The first filter of the analysis of these websites was based on determining the activities they carried out, the elaborated products, and whether they were marketed. Monasteries that met the two parameters of the research (elaboration of wine and gastronomic products) were selected for further study.

In the second stage, an in-depth analysis of the monasteries was developed. Fig. 1 summarizes the results obtained in phases 1 and 2.

The selected monasteries (39) received emails for the question-and-answer session; 18 of them responded, but only 13 of them answered the questionnaire. Given this background, an effortless and straightforward approach was sought to obtain the essential data for this study. Hence, two communication techniques were suggested, namely an online face-to-face interview or a written questionnaire in various languages (including Spanish, English, Italian, and German). Both cases would yield the same information. Only one monastery consented to the interview, while the remaining 12 monasteries opted to complete the questionnaire. The respondents comprised members of the staff employed in various areas, including lay individuals, and in certain instances, the abbot, the prior, or a monk, (see Fig. 2). First-hand information from the monasteries themselves has been a limitation of this study, since only 13 of 39 have responded to the researchers' questions. Although the Benedictine community is not a cloistered order, in general, being able to access information and enter the day-to-day life of monastic communities is limited, as shown by other studies such as Freire (2023).

Questions focused on two areas: tourism and monastic products (see Fig. 3). The first part of the questionnaire sought to determine what gastronomic products and drinks were produced and sold. The second part of the questionnaire addressed tourist services offered as well as the visitor profile and main motivations.

The analysis of the websites of the selected monasteries allowed the authors to gather complementary data on the monastic products and tourist services offered by the monasteries. Several studies have studied and analyzed tourism websites adopting different approaches, such as Gupta and Utkarsh (2014), Buhalis and Spada (2000), and Kaplanidou and Vogt (2006). In this research, authors focus on the analysis of the information quality using the guidelines proposed by Castellucci (2007), which includes issues like: updates, geographic location, how to reach the site, services provided, availability to book/shop online, timetable and opening hours, information provided about culture, history, religion, products ... The data provided by a website allows for gaining a broader understanding of goods and services provided (Kotler et al., 2013).

The analysis was complemented by using netnography, allowing researchers to generate valuable insights about the services and monastic products offered (Kozinets and Gretzel, 2024). The websites of the abbeys have become a basic tool for communication and dissemination between the monasteries and visitors who wish to obtain information on the different tourist, religious, and recreational activities, as well as the production and sale of its products.

Website analysis		MONASTERIES																
		BENEDICTINE				CISTER				TRAPA				CAMALDULA				OVERALL GENERAL
		M	F	MM	TOTAL	M	F	MM	TOTAL	M	F	MM	TOTAL	M	F	MM	TOTAL	
		60	18	2	80	34	57		91	48	35	1	84	8	3		11	266
FIRST STAGE	Selection of the Monasteries according to the parameters	22	5	1	28	3			3	6	1		7	1			1	39
SECOND STAGE	Selected Monasteries- Request for Information.																	
	Interview	1																1
	Questionnaires	7	2		9	2			2					1			1	12
FINAL FINDING:																	13	

*M: Male. F: Female. MM: Mixed Monasteries

Fig. 1. Monasteries.

Source: Own elaboration based on selected data

4. Findings

The products elaborated and their connection to the intangible heritage will be the focus of the findings and discussion.

Fig. 4 shows that the monasteries analyzed are located in different European countries: Italy (Monastero di Camaldoli, Abbazia di Monte Oliveto Maggiore, Monastero di Santa Maria di Chiaravalle, Abbazia di Praglia), Switzerland (Kloster St. Johann Müstair, Kloster Einsiedeln), Hungary (Pannonhalmi Fápátság), Austria (Benediktinerstift Admont), France (Abbaye Notre Dame de Fidélité), Spain (Santa Maria de la Oliva) and Czech Republic (Benediktinský klášter Rajhrad). As stated in the theoretical framework, monasteries spread throughout Europe during the Middle Ages in close connection with the development of pilgrimage routes and the spread of Catholicism, which would explain the representation in most European countries. The study further revealed that out of the 13 monasteries, 10 are Benedictine, 2 are Cistercian, and one is known as Camaldolese/Benedictine. From the analyzed monasteries, 11 are monk communities, and 2 are nun communities (see Fig. 5).

Regarding beverage production (Fig. 6), out of the 13 monasteries examined, 11 produce wines, 8 liqueurs, 5 beers, 3 grappa, 1 cider, and 4 juices. According to the questionnaire results, the most popular product in 7 monasteries is wine.

The Pannonhalmi Fápátság, for example, produces around 400,000 bottles a year, and is their main source of income, and in the Abbaye Notre Dame de Fidélité, around 20,000 bottles sold each year. The tradition of its preparation stands out in others: “the winery with its products, such as wine and grappa, are a traditional activity attested since the origin of the monastery” (Abbazia di Praglia); “Wine has been made since the founding of the Monastery in the 12th century” (Santa Maria de la Oliva). Furthermore, the quality of the product is also highlighted: “We make wines in their different varieties that enjoy international recognition” (Benediktinerstift Admont).

Out of the 13 monasteries analyzed, only two of them do not produce wine. In the case of Kloster St. Johann Müstair, the Benedictine nuns possess a historic winery in South Tyrol (Italy) where an external company produces the wine “Clostra Son Jon”. Similarly, the monks of Klášter Rajhrad have leased their winery to a private entity, which produces the wines known as “Rajhradské klášterní.” These wines are offered in the products of both monasteries, and they are available in both their physical and online stores.

Although the precise origin of wine remains uncertain, it is widely acknowledged that the plant was initially cultivated in the Caucasian region and subsequently spread throughout the Mediterranean

(Campbell and Guibert, 2007). During the Middle Ages, along with the expansion of monastic communities, winemaking gained prominence, particularly in nations such as Italy, France, and Spain (Millon, 2013; Varriano, 2022). The European Union is viewed as the Old World when it comes to wine production (Campbell and Guibert, 2007) and, even today, it remains the world’s largest wine-producing nation. Between 2016 and 2020, the average annual production reached 165 million hectolitres. In the year 2020, wine accounted for 45% of the wine-growing area, 64% of production, and 48% of consumption globally, making it the largest agri-food sector in the EU in terms of exports (7.6% of the agri-food value exported in 2020) (DG for Agriculture and Rural Development of European Commission, n.d.).

It is possible to establish a connection between the regions where wine has been traditionally produced and the geographical location of the monasteries that continue to produce wine. The inability of numerous monasteries to produce wine today is attributed, among other factors, to the absence of generational change in many of them (Beltrán Peralta et al., 2022). In the case of Italy, which is internationally recognized for its preservation of its wine tradition, the monasteries examined are in regions where wine production holds significant importance like Tuscany (Monastero di Camaldoli and Abbazia di Monte Oliveto Maggiore), Veneto (Abbazia di Praglia), and Lombardy (Monastero di Santa Maria di Chiaravalle). The observation can be made in the context of monasteries in France and Spain. It is impossible to imagine these nations without immediately thinking about the high-end, cult-like status and array of their wine offerings. The Abbaye Notre Dame de Fidélité is in Provence, a region that has been renowned for its delicate and exquisite wines for over two thousand years, according to Explore France (2018). Another notable instance is the Santa Maria de la Oliva Abbey located in Spain, which is widely regarded for its exceptional wine culture and scenic beauty. According to the data, Spain boasts a total of 969,000 ha of vineyards, accounting for 13% of the global total. Additionally, in addition to Italy and France, Spain boasts approximately 4300 wineries and approximately 235 grape varieties (Turespaña, 2023). The monastery is in Navarra, within the municipality of Carcastillo, which borders the DO Rioja, which is internationally recognized (Valenciano and Roman Sanchez, 2011).

Another aspect that has been examined in this research is the production of food products. As depicted in Fig. 7, it can be observed that the monasteries analyzed offer a diverse range of products, encompassing both traditional and innovative offerings, including chocolate, mustard, coffee, vinegar, tea, pasta, candies, probiotic products, sausages, and other similar items.

#	Monasteries			Interviewees' Information			
	Order	Name	Location	Gender	Job Position	Age	# Years in Monastery /Abbey:
1	Camaldolese/ Benedictine	Monastero di Camaldoli.	Italy	Male	General Prior	64	39
2	Benedictine	Abbazia di Monte Oliveto Maggiore.	Italy	Male	No data	55	8
3	Cister	Monastero di Santa Maria di Chiaravalle.	Italy	Male	Ecclesiastical Administrator /Economo	ND	11
4	Benedictine	Abbazia di Praglia.	Italy	Male	Abbot	62	33
5	Benedictine	Pannonhalmi Főapátság -	Hungary	Male	Marketing & Sales Manager	42	18
6	Benedictine	Szent Maurícius Monostor.	Hungary	Female	Tourism manager	37	9
7	Benedictine	Kloster St. Johann Müstair	Switzerland	Female	Responsible Museum Shop and Visitor Center	ND	ND
8	Benedictine	Kloster Einsiedeln	Switzerland	Male	Information Office	79	59
9	Benedictine	Benediktinerstif Admont.	Austria	Male	Director of Culture, Tourism and Public Relations	37	6
10	Benedictine	Abtei Münsterschwarzach	Germany	Female	Press officer	31	4
11	Benedictine	Benediktinský klášter Rajhrad	Czech Republic	Male	Monk, head of the monastery shop .	43	10
12	Benedictine	Abbaye Notre Dame de Fidélité.	France	Female	Ecclesiastical administrator	ND	ND
13	Cister	Abadía Santa María de la Oliva.	Spain	Male	Monk, Second superior of the Community	82	68

Fig. 2. Interviewees' information.

Source: Own elaboration based on selected data

Traditional products include cookies, cheese, honey, jams, bread, and olive oil. The Gemme di Pino” candies” are among the oldest products produced in the Monastero Camaldoli, along with the “pasta sauces” from the Monastero di Santa Maria di Chiaravalle.

“Anise cookies are the best-selling product and are made with an ancient recipe from the monastery” Kloster St. Johann Müstair.

“The composition of the olive oil, its good flavour, and because it comes from the region of Provence” Abbaye Notre Dame de Fidélité.

The preparation of these traditional goods, as it turns out, is influenced by ancient recipe books and ancestral cooking techniques, which, in many instances, are preserved within the walls of monasteries and, in some instances, become tourist attractions.

Using the data collected, it is also possible to appreciate the introduction of new gastronomic dishes, such as the seasoned salts Spices (from the garden) at the Kloster St. Johann Müstair, grapeseed oil from Pannonhalmi Főapátság, Meat “Klosterqualität” from the Abtei of Münsterschwarzach, aromatic salts and sausages from the Monastero di Santa Maria di Chiaravalle, and wafers (typical Czech gift from pilgrimages), gingerbreads, prebiotic Lozenges from Benediktinský Klášter Rajhrad. The production of artisanal products in convents and monasteries has historically served as the foundation for the sustenance of various European monastic orders, as documented by [Mapelli \(2004\)](#), and in this particular instance, it is no exception. The utilization of non-traditional products is precisely geared towards enhancing income to sustain monasteries.

It is in response to this need that numerous monasteries offer diverse

Questions regarding Gastronomic products.	Beverages and products made or sold in the Monasteries		Featured Products	BEST-SELLING PRODUCTS	¿Indicate if there is any product for which tourists could visit specifically this Monastery?	¿Why are these products made in the monastery? Tradition / custom / Benedictine rule / other...
	Beverages	Gastronomics Products				
Questions about tourism services and types of tourism.	TOURIST OFFER		TOURISTS			
	Tourist Services	Services most used by Tourist	Data and origin	Tourism types / visitors (SCORE 1-5)		Reasons to visit the Monastery
			# visits per year ()	Religious ()	Gastronomic ()	
			Origin of Tourists ()	Rural ()	Natural ()	

Fig. 3. Questionnaires to the monasteries.
Source: Own elaboration based on selected data

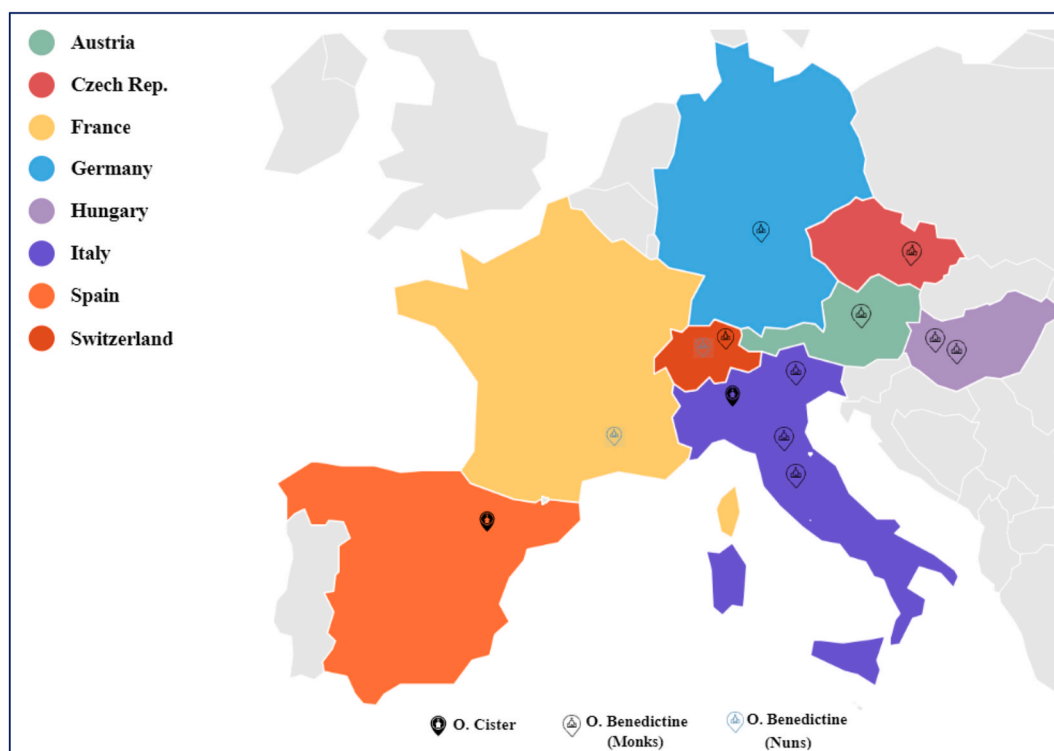


Fig. 4. Monasteries location.
Source: Own elaboration based on selected data

tourist activities. Museum tours, lodging, restaurants, product tasting, visits to wineries, rental of facilities, concerts, and product/souvenir shops are some activities offered. It is noteworthy that the monastic experience encompasses both heritage and history, gastronomy, and wine, as well as the surrounding landscape, as noted by Aulet et al. (2017). Similarly, each of these monasteries offers a single or a combination of services that are frequently requested by tourists, including but not limited to guided tours (10), accommodation (3), visits (2), museum tours (2), and the liturgy of the hours (2) (see Fig. 8 and Fig. 9).

The interviewees emphasized that the tourist services provided are linked to diverse motivations, ranging from cultural (associated with tangible heritage) to religious (associated with intangible and spiritual heritage), including gastronomy (associated with cultural landscape and intangible legacy):

“Visits to our monastery are motivated by the set of possibilities that the abbey offers (spiritual, cultural, artistic, gastronomic, etc.), **Benediktinerstift Admont**,

“Tourists come for the artistic, religious and monastic offerings” **Santa María de la Oliva Abbey**,

“Religious tourism (pilgrims) and artistic tourism, due to its baroque complex” **Kloster Einsiedeln**.

Certain visits are motivated by the connection with the production of agri-food products in some monasteries. The agricultural sector provides the product, the cultural sector provides authenticity, and the tourism sector provides the infrastructure and services (Bernó et al., 2014):

“Our visitors can see the garden and then buy its products,” **Szent Mauríciusz Monostor**,

#	Information on the selected Monasteries						
	Order	Name	Location	Foundation date	Monastic Community	# of Monks or Nuns	Directed by
1	Camaldolese/ Benedictine	Monastero di Camaldoli	Italy	1025	Monks	20-25	P. Matteo Ferrari ,OSB Cam. Prior General
2	Benedictine	Abbazia di Monte Oliveto Maggiore.	Italy	1319	Monks	30	Diego Gualtiero Maria Rosa, O.S.B. Oliv. Abbot
3	Cister	Monastero di Santa Maria di Chiaravalle	Italy	1135	Monks	15	Stefano Zanolini, Abbot
4	Benedictine	Abbazia di Praglia	Italy	1080	Monks	40	P.D. Stefano Visintin, Abbot
5	Benedictine	Pannonhalmi Főapátság	Hungary	996	Monks	40 - 47	Hortobágyi T. Cirill OSB , Abbot
6	Benedictine	Szent Mauríciusz Monostor	Hungary	1018 & *1998	Monks	9	It is a monastery dependent on the Pannonhalmi Főapátság
7	Benedictine	Kloster St. Johann Müstair	Switzerland	780	Nuns	9	Aloisia Steiner OSB, Prioress.
8	Benedictine	Kloster Einsiedeln	Switzerland	835	Monks	41	Urban Federer, O.S.B, Abbot
9	Benedictine	Benediktinerstif Admont	Austria	1074	Monks	26	Gerhard Hafner, OSB, Abbot
10	Benedictine	Abtei de Münsterschwarz ach	Germany	816 & *1913	Monks	93	Michael Reepen, OSB Abbot
11	Benedictine	Benediktinský klášter Rajhrad	Czech Republic	1045	Monks	8	P. Maximilian Petr Krenn OSB, Superior
12	Benedictine	Abbaye Notre Dame de Fidélité	France	1967	Nuns	47	Mother Marie Monique Guttin, Abbess
13	Cister	Abadía Santa María de la Oliva	Spain	1134	Monks	12	Francisco Javier Urós , Abbot

* Re-foundation date

Fig. 5. Information on the selected Monasteries.
Source: Own elaboration based on selected data

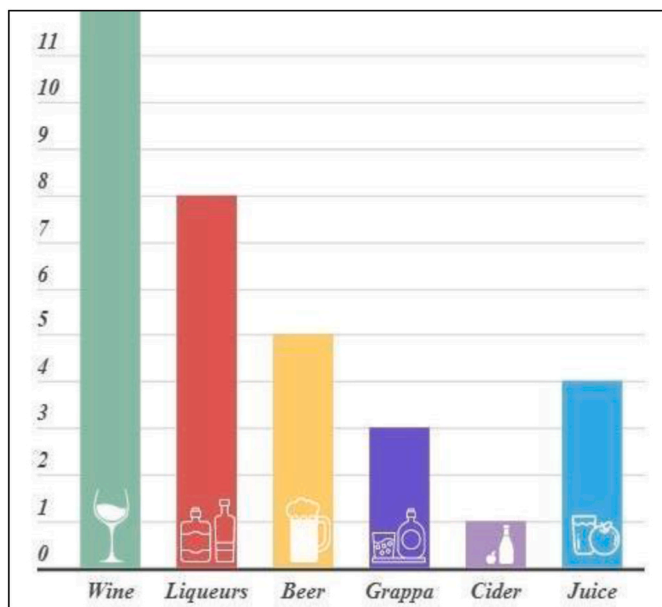


Fig. 6. Beverages produced in the Monasteries. Source: Own elaboration based on selected data

“The diversity of the services and products of Pannonhalma, wine is the main reason and the second one is the Lavender Garden” *Pannonhalmi Főapátság*,

“Being a monastery in the countryside, there are other traditional agricultural activities that at this time concentrate on olive oil and honey” *Abbazia di Praglia*,

In addition to the straightforward visit, most monasteries offer the opportunity to sample diverse products, enabling them to showcase

them and subsequently market them in their store. All but two of the monasteries provide lodging and the opportunity to gain insight into the monastic community, while approximately half of them provide catering services.

The monasteries possess a significant artistic and architectural heritage, and the monks and nuns have diligently upheld and preserved them over the years. In certain instances, they have been designated as World Heritage by UNESCO. For instance, the Kloster St. Johann Müstair in Switzerland was designated as World Heritage in 1983, while the Pannonhalmi Főapátság in Hungary was compiled in 1996. The second case is particularly interesting, as it focuses on the “structure and environment of an early Christian monastery that has evolved over a thousand years of continuous use” (UNESCO, 1992–2023). In the first example, the nuns themselves state that the convent is “more than just a monument; it is a living cultural treasure” (UNESCO, 1992–2023). The majority of the monasteries analyzed possess a significant cultural legacy. For example, both the Benediktiner Stift Admont in Austria and the Santa Maria de la Oliva Abbey in Spain are among the oldest in their respective countries. According to the results, visitors are motivated by cultural elements such as history or architecture.

5. Conclusions

In today’s European landscape, Benedictine monasteries serve as crucial custodians of both tangible and intangible heritage, bridging the gap between tradition and modernity. The interplay between tangible artifacts such as historic buildings, manuscripts, and artwork, and intangible elements like spiritual practices, rituals, and gastronomy creates a unique cultural tapestry within these monastic communities.

The primary objective of this investigation is to determine Benedictine monastic products in Europe. The initial observation that can be drawn from this investigation is that, despite the existence of a substantial number of monasteries throughout Europe, monastic communities are progressively shrinking due to a lack of vocations. As a result,

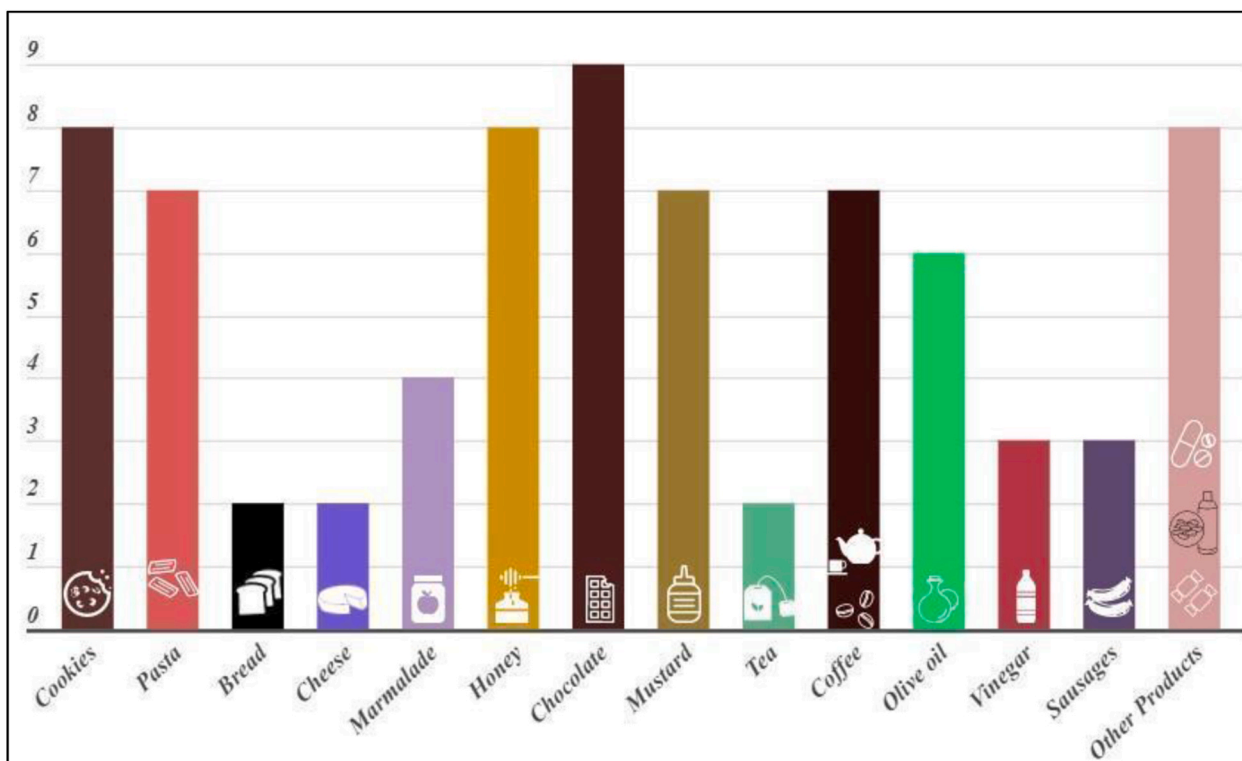


Fig. 7. Gastronomic products made in the Monasteries. Source: Own elaboration based on selected data

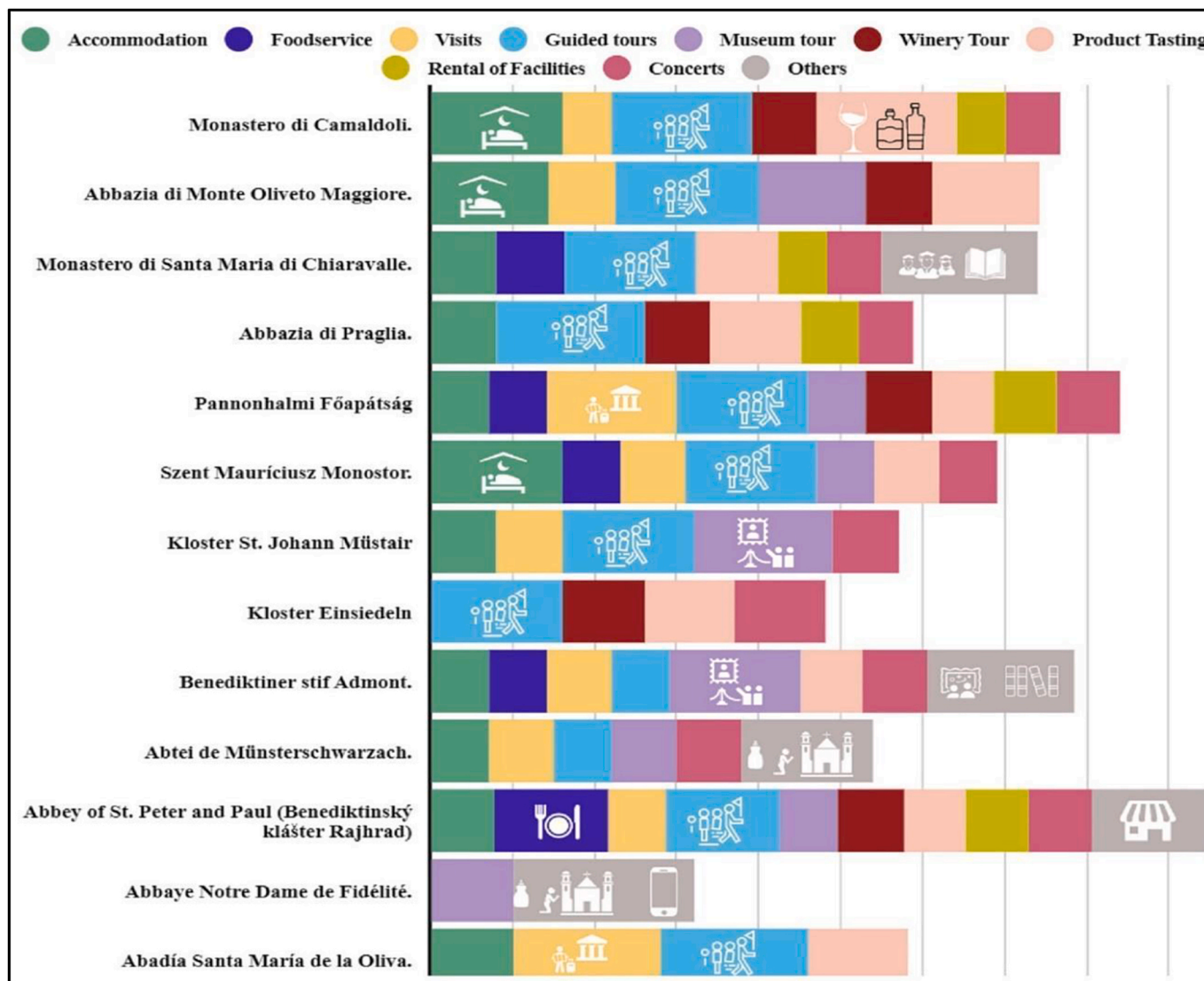


Fig. 8. Tourist services.
Source: Own elaboration based on selected data

many of the traditional activities that were once carried out are no longer undertaken, as evidenced by the fact that only 39 Benedictine monasteries across Europe are still producing some form of agri-food product.

Even so, monastic products play a pivotal role in sustaining the economic viability of Benedictine monasteries, providing a tangible link to their heritage while also meeting the demands of their visitors. From artisanal foods and beverages to handcrafted goods and religious items, these products generate revenue and serve as ambassadors of the monastery’s values and traditions. By preserving and promoting these products, Benedictine monasteries ensure their sustainability and contribute to the preservation of local traditions and skills.

Therefore, the proposal of tourism activities facilitates the acquisition of resources for the upkeep of not only the community but also heritage spaces. Tourism emerges as a double-edged sword for Benedictine monasteries, presenting both opportunities and challenges. While tourism offers a platform to showcase their heritage, engage with visitors, and generate income, it also brings the risk of over-commercialization, cultural dilution, and disruption to the monastic way of life. Striking a balance between welcoming tourists and preserving the contemplative atmosphere of the monastery is essential to ensuring the long-term sustainability and authenticity of these sacred

spaces.

The lifestyle established by the Benedictine rule holds significant importance in ensuring the continuity of certain aspects, including manual labor, hospitality service, and the transmission of generational knowledge among the members of these monastic communities. This is another aspect that is deemed significant. Many monasteries produce products based on traditional recipes that have been handed down from generation to generation, thereby preserving the intangible legacy. Benedictine monasteries can continue to thrive as vibrant centers of spirituality, culture, and community in the ever-changing landscape of contemporary Europe.

Implications for gastronomy

The data obtained in this research permitted us to know the gastronomic monastic products still being elaborated in these monasteries. The monks and nuns try to take care of, preserve, and protect their ancient recipes, this helps to keep the culinary tradition alive, this being one of the ways used to preserve and conserve the monastic gastronomic intangible heritage.

Monasteries			
Name / Odrer	Region	Main characteristics of Monasteries	Motivation for tourists to visit the Monastery*
Monastero di Camaldoli / Camaldolese	Tuscany, Italy	Founded at the beginning of the 11th century. In a natural park (Casentinesi Forests National Park). Combination of contemplative, working and, productive life (vineyards, farm, cosmetics laboratory, guest house). Foundation that protects and promotes the library, archival, and artistic heritage preserved in the Sacred Hermitage and Monastery.	It could be the occasion to visit a monastic reality where monks live and work (just like the Benedictine order says "Ora et labora") – we are one of the last monastic order that owns a farm, a vineyard, a cosmetic laboratory, and a guesthouse as accommodation) – all are dipped in the national Park of the Casentinesi Forests.
Abbazia di Monte Oliveto Maggiore / Benedictine	Tuscany, Italy	Mother house of the "Olivetanos". The Monastery stands out for the main cloister and the grandiose library. The Church was built at the beginning of the 15th century in Romanesque-Gothic style. The abbey has a farm, vineyard, liquor store, monastic pharmacy, guesthouse, etc. The agricultural activity of the monks is attested in historical sources since the origins of the monastery.	ND
Monastero di Santa Maria di Chiaravalle / Cister	Lombardy, Italy	One of the most important Italian monastic complexes. Founded around the year 1000. The monks developed the recipe for the famous "Grana Padano" cheese. The monastery has a cloister, and a chapter house decorated with paintings donated by important local artists. The monks carry out agricultural work and have a guest house, a restaurant, and a shop where they offer their monastic products.	To get to know the daily life of the monks, to search for their own cultural, and social identity. Experiment, practice in the laboratory, and self-production of the products.
Abbazia di Praglia / Benedictine	Veneto, Italy	Has four cloisters, the church, the Fogazzaro loggia, the monumental refectory, the chapter house, a library, an astronomical observatory, etc. It offers accommodation, a wine cellar (procedures of a millenary tradition), and its famous shop with products made by the monks.	The Abbey, which was built in the 14th century is a national monument, a work of art, a shop with products made in the abbey, and opportunities for walks.
Pannonhalma Főapátság / Benedictine	Western Transdanubia, Hungary	Is the first tourist attraction in the area. Pannonhalma Abbey and its natural surroundings have been a UNESCO World Heritage Site since 1996. It has the largest Benedictine community in Hungary, and in addition to monastic life, it is active in the fields of hospitality, tourism, viticulture and winemaking, brewing, gastronomy, and trade in the abbey's products.	The diversity of the services and products of Pannonhalma. Also, because this is a living monastery. So, you can still see how the buildings and the facilities have always been used by a Benedictine community because they're the same system as it was a thousand years before.
Szent Mauríciusz Monostor / Benedictine	Central Transdanubia, Hungary	This monastery is a dependency of the Archabbey of Pannonhalma, and in the rhythm of prayer and work the monks work in different areas, from making products to offering services such as hosting, visits, restaurants, tours of the herb gardens, etc.	ND
Kloster Johann Müstair / Benedictine	Canton of Graubünden, Switzerland	World Heritage Site since 1983, the monastery church, built in the 8th century, houses the largest and most well-preserved cycle of paintings in the world. The sisters are dedicated to prayer, spiritual reading, and work in various tasks; in the garden, in the office, in the kitchen, etc.,	-We are Unesco World Heritage. -The monastery was built by Charlemagne - the fact that there are still nuns living in the monastery.

Fig. 9. Main features of monasteries.

Source: Own elaboration based on selected data

Kloster Einsiedeln / Benedictine	Canton of Schwyz, Switzerland	The monastery is a baroque-style building with four atriums, being part of the Camino de Santiago and having the famous Black Virgin of the 15th century. It is a destination for many pilgrims and tourists. The community lives are governed between prayer and work, in the cellar, shop, hosting of pilgrims, etc.	There are two groups: pilgrims who come for religious reasons and tourists who come for the Baroque church and the Baroque monastery complex.
Benediktinerstift Admont / Benedictine	Styria, Austria	It is the oldest existing monastery in all of Styria, Austria, and has the largest monastic library in the world, famous also for the architectural design and the works of art. In the times between prayers, the monks perform different activities and services, such as the winery, accommodation, pilgrim route, gardens, cultural programs, etc.	For the cultural and artistic offerings, especially the large library of the abbey as a major tourist attraction.
Abtei de Münsterschwabach / Benedictine	Bavaria, Germany	The monks give priority to all those seeking silence and contemplation and offer retreats and deepening of faith in their guesthouse. Its monks and employees produce monastic products, goldsmiths, metal, electrical, and painting workshops, shops, bakery, butchery, carpentry, distillery, brandy distillery, and fair trade.	Religious tourism, visiting church, and need for silence.
Benediktinský klášter Rajhrad / Benedictine	South Moravia Region, Czech Republic	klášter Rajhrad is one of the oldest and most famous monasteries in Moravia and has the largest Moravian monastic library. The monks combine their daily life between prayer and the tasks they carry out on the farm, welcoming pilgrims and making products, etc	More solemn celebration of the liturgy (singing, musical accompaniment). Possibility of accommodation with spiritual accompaniment. Extension of recreational and ornamental gardens.
Abbaye Notre Dame de Fidélité / Benedictine	Provence-Alpes-Côte d'Azur, France	The nuns' routine is marked by liturgy, lectio divina, work, and fraternal life, their tasks are carried out in the vineyard, the lavender fields, and olive trees, cultivating them naturally.	The spiritual nourishment, the offices for its Gregorian chant in Latin, the peace that one breathes, and the beauty of the Provençal landscape: under a southern light, its fields of lavender, its countryside surrounded by mountains, its almond and olive trees, and its gastronomic products.
Abadía Santa María de la Oliva / Benedictine	Navarra, Spain	It is considered the oldest monastery in Spain. It is a Cistercian community dedicated to the Divine Office and study, but also working to generate income, maintaining the ancient tradition of viticulture, producing wines and harvesting olives, and caring for nature and its environment.	Artistic, religious, and monastic.

*Interviewers 'Information

Fig. 9. (continued).

CRedit authorship contribution statement

Natalia Beltrán Peralta: Writing – review & editing, Writing – original draft, Methodology, Investigation, Formal analysis, Conceptualization. **Silvia Aulet:** Writing – review & editing, Writing – original draft, Supervision, Investigation, Conceptualization. **Joaquim Majó Fernández:** Supervision, Investigation.

Declaration of competing interest

The authors declare that they have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence

the work reported in this paper.

Data availability

Data will be made available on request.

Acknowledgments

The authors would like to express their gratitude to the monasteries for their cooperation and for providing the necessary data to further the investigation.

Open Access funding provided thanks to the CRUE-CSIC agreement

with Elsevier.

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