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I'm a 2nd year PhD Student, in "Geography, spatial planning and environmental management" at the University of Barcelona. Currently, I develop my thesis project, about tourism geography; my interest, is to understand the territorial effects of culinary tourism in Catalonia, from the analysis of the distribution and marketing of its food products. One of my main topics is try to understand the food supply chain of this products, it's characteristics, the relationships between the different agents involved and try to figure out the links with local development in a given territory. My research focus on concepts such: local products, alternative food chains, geography of taste, short food supply chains, and off course, new tourism modalities in which gastronomic or culinary tourism is one of those.

GASTRONOMIC TOURISM AS A PROMOTER OF TRADICIONAL PRODUCTS IN MOUNTAIN AREAS

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Abstract:

Many rural development programs and policies frequently include among their actions the promotion of typical or traditional products, usually referred to as “local or regional products” (Caldentey, 2001; Ilbery & Kneafsey, 1998; Tregear et al., 2007). Clearly, the promotion of such products can serve as part of a wider program for spurring regional development (Tregear, et al, 2007).

Indeed, the existence of a growing market sector that demands products of these characteristics (Bessiere, 1998, Holloway & Kneafsey, 2000) makes the promotion of local products, as part of gastronomy tourism, particularly interesting. Gastronomic tourism is ultimately a means to achieving local development and serves as a basic tool for the promotion and distribution of local agro food products (Hjalaguer & Richards, 2002).

This paper analyzes the potential offered by marketing mountain traditional products through gastronomic tourism in Catalonia and its relationship with local development, because these areas suffer depopulation and abandonment of productive agricultural activity, although they have food products which are highly recognized and valued for their quality throughout Catalonia. This analysis will contribute to the discussion of this form of tourism as a mechanism for local development in geographically marginalized territories.

To achieve this, the study is based on data obtained from the application of 32 surveys to producers, 21 retailers and 22 to restaurants and hotels, all of them linked to the promotion of traditional products from the Pyrenees. The surveys were supplemented with application of semi-structured interviews applied to public institutions related with gastronomic tourism strategies in the region.

The findings of the paper , highlights, how gastronomic tourism in mountain areas might be an opportunity for productive diversification, resulting in local development opportunities, because in food products' trading, participate a wide of stakeholders, such as producers, retailers and restaurateurs, who would benefit from this recent form of tourism.

Key words: Gastronomic tourism, local development, mountain products, Catalonia.

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