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Stakeholders, collaboration, food and wine: The case of Jumilla's Gastronomic Days

Abstract

An emerging literature on gastronomic events highlights the growing interest among academics, event organisers and development agencies in identifying potential or actual outcomes from gastronomic events. Partly in response to such interest, this study seeks to contribute to the literature on events management, studying the contribution of various stakeholders involved in the 'Gastronomic Days' of Jumilla, Spain. Semi-structured, face-to-face, in-depth interviews were conducted with the managers and owners of four participating businesses to the event. The data collection was complemented through on-site visits, observations, and interviews with eight other local businesses. The findings underline the significance of collaboration among these participants to grow and sustain the event, as well as voluntary efforts by event 'stakeholders.' Importantly, a common objective was identified in the form of enhancing the image of the local products, and overall that of the region, to 'convert' residents, and also outside consumers and tourists to Jumilla's products. These findings have significant implications for Jumilla's community. In particular, the importance and efforts of a region's food stakeholders in contributing to adding value and improving the local food culture emerge as useful aspects, with potential benefits for local food growers, hospitality and tourism sectors, and residents.

Keywords: Gastronomic events, stakeholders, stakeholder theory, collaboration, triple-bottom-line, Jumilla, Spain.

INTRODUCTION

Gastronomic events, such as wine and food festivals, are becoming a very important special interest tourism activity. Arguably, these events are triggered by growing interest in local gastronomy, which is emerging as a key contributing factor in enhancing the appeal and

development of regions, increasingly known for their culinary tourism (López-Guzmán & Sánchez-Cañizares, 2012). In the case of Spain, a country with centuries of a strong and very diverse gastronomic tradition, culinary tourism and culinary events have gained in importance. Indeed, after many decades of limited gastronomic prominence among tourists, as Spanish cuisine did not constitute a major attraction to visitors (Ravenscroft & van Westering, 2002), the situation appears to have changed significantly in recent years. Today, apart from the wide range of gastronomic offerings, numerous food festivals are organised in all corners of Spain throughout the year. Importantly, many of these festivals have been established in the last decade. These developments have been coupled with efforts and initiatives of culinary associations, including those established in recent times. For example, a national association ('Saborea España', or Tasting Spain) was created in 2009 to contribute to the development of culinary tourism in the country (Duarte Alonso, 2014). What started as a selected group of fewer than 10 culinary destinations adhering to the association has in the meantime grown to 19 (<http://www.tastingspain.es/>).

Mirroring the continuous increase of gastronomic or culinary events, the literature focussing on these leisure activities has also grown massively, with many researchers making contributions from a variety of regions, countries, or research areas (e.g., Axelsen & Swan, 2010; Çela, Knowles-Lankford, & Lankford, 2007; Everett & Slocum, 2013; López-Guzmán & Sánchez-Cañizares, 2012; Mason & Paggiaro, 2012; Qiu, Yuan, Ye, & Hung, 2013; Spilková & Fialová, 2013). Studies have also examined the supply side, or festivals' stakeholders, including organisers, participating businesses and entities (Cavicchi, Santini, & Belletti, 2013).

Another side of research has attempted to identify the impacts of the festival on the local community, for instance, in terms of branding, or overall socio-economic development (e.g.,

Blichfeldt & Halkier, 2014). The present study is concerned with some of these impacts, in that it investigates the efforts of various festival stakeholders, and how these efforts may lead to tangible outcomes for their community. The chosen environment for the study is Jumilla's Gastronomic Days, an event which takes place in this Spanish town and its surroundings.

The links between the event showcased in the present study, the organisation (Jumilla's wine trail association), the participating businesses, and their contribution support the adoption of stakeholder theory (Donaldson & Preston, 1995; Freeman 1984, 1994, 2004; 2010; Freeman, Wicks & Parmar, 2004). Freeman (2010) defines a stakeholder as any individual or group who is either affected by or affects the achievement of a business's goals. Stakeholder theory has been used and explained in a variety of ways (Donaldson & Preston, 1995; Parmar, Freeman, Harrison, Wicks, Purnell, & de Colle, 2010), and is inextricably interconnected with ways in which a) managers ought to act, and b) corporations ought to be governed (Freeman, 1994). Moreover, the theory is based on the following premise: values are explicitly and necessarily linked to conducting business (Freeman et al., 2004). This premise strongly suggests links between the theory and different forms of conducting business ethically, including through the adoption of social capital, corporate social responsibility, and collaboration.

With regard to collaboration, the study first focuses on collaborative efforts among stakeholders involved in the showcased gastronomic event. To this end, the following research questions (RQs) are investigated:

RQ1: To what extent are stakeholders of the Gastronomic Days involved in collaboration amongst themselves?

RQ2: What might be some of the potential impacts resulting from collaborative relationships, for instance, socio-economic impacts?

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The work of Hede (2007) is also valuable to the present study, in that the triple-bottom-line (TBL) is presented as an emerging concept in special event research, where food and wine festivals are also included. The TBL combines into one single framework economic, environmental and social aspects (Hede, 2007). In her research, Hede (2007) proposed two different Special Event Stakeholder Maps to participants, who were represented by both practitioners and academics. Hede's (2007) findings were then depicted in a Special Event Primary Stakeholder Map, where she separated special event stakeholders by their TBL-related interest (e.g., economic, environmental, social). Based on respondents' feedback, the interests of three stakeholder groups (government, community groups, and residents) appear to include all three TBL domains. Further, the interests of four groups (sponsors, media, businesses, and employees) seems to match the economic and social domains, while those of two other stakeholder groups (volunteers, tourist-attendees) were perceived to be only in the social domain (Hede, 2007). Partly aligned with the concept of TBL, the aspects of long-term sustainability and social capital are considered in the formulation of the third RQ:

RQ3: To what extent do the local 'stakeholders', particularly the participating businesses, contribute to the overall wealth of Jumilla's community, including socio-economically?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Culinary tourism and stakeholders

Gastronomic festivals represent a key component of the historical identity of many towns and communities (Cavicchi et al., 2013). Festivals constitute expressions of culture of the local territory, and their goals include promotion, dissemination, and the preservation of cultural heritage (Cavicchi et al., 2013). At the same time, festivals can help raise awareness of the region's heritage, such as peripheral museums, abbeys or churches (Cavicchi et al., 2013). The establishment and execution of gastronomic events and the development of culinary tourism, particularly focussing on local, more typical themes and products, rely very heavily

on the work of various stakeholders. Cavicchi et al. (2013), for instance, underline the significant role of the hospitality sector, including restaurateurs, chefs, and bartenders, or that of producers, resellers and services, such as wineries.

While not explicitly using the term ‘stakeholders’, the study by Smith and Xiao (2008) clearly underlines the significance of stakeholders when they discuss the supply chain in the context of culinary tourism. Based on their adoption of supply chain theory, Smith and Xiao (2008) recognise the significance of linkages between distributors and producers. Moreover, as other forms of economic production, culinary tourism is reliant on various ‘upstream’ suppliers for commodities (supply chain) that are needed to create gastronomic experiences (Smith & Xiao, 2008). At the other end, or ‘downstream’, are the consumers (festival visitors), who are catered for by a distribution channel, composed among other key players by restaurants, festivals or markets (Smith & Xiao, 2008); together, these actors make the gastronomic experience possible. Given their significance for the present research, the various associations between stakeholders are examined in the next section through the lens of stakeholder theory.

Stakeholder theory (ST)

According to Freeman (2004), ST asks managers to articulate a) how key stakeholders can be brought together, and b) the sense of value they can create. ST is associated with “practical concerns of managers” (Freeman, 2004, p. 230), such as ways in which they could be more effective in analysing, identifying, or in negotiating with important stakeholder groups (Freeman, 2004).

The work of Donaldson and Preston (1995) identifies four central theses linked to ST:

Descriptive/Empirical: As the label suggests, the thesis describes corporations as a collection of competitive and collaborative interests that possess intrinsic value; this term is referred to as “valuable for its own sake” (Beardsley, 1965, p. 1). Further, the theory is used to explain or describe particular corporate behaviours and characteristics (Donaldson & Preston, 1995).

The work of Kochan and Rubinstein (2000) is also insightful, in that it underlines that ST

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should address questions that help explain what is needed for stakeholder businesses to perform effectively, last and become sustainable in the future. In this regard, characteristics and behaviours as identified by Donaldson and Preston (1995), particularly entrepreneurial traits or drive among business managers could be very significant.

Instrumental: This thesis refers to identifying existing connections- or lacking connections- between stakeholder management and the accomplishment of traditional corporate goals, such as growth or profitability (Donaldson & Preston, 1995).

Normative: The acceptance of two fundamental ideas form the basis of this thesis: 1) Stakeholders are groups or people with genuine interests in substantive or procedural aspects of corporate activities; 2) these “interests are of intrinsic value” (Donaldson & Preston, 1995, p. 67), whereby stakeholders merit consideration ‘for their own sake,’ and not simply seeking to further the interests of other groups, such as in the case of a company’s shareholders.

Managerial: In essence, ST goes beyond only helping predict cause-effect relationships or describe current situations; in fact, it recommends practices, structures, and attitudes constituting stakeholder management (Donaldson & Preston, 1995).

ST in the context of events

Earlier event management research has discussed the potential usefulness of ST to study festival organisers. For example, a study of a music festival (Andersson & Getz, 2008), sought to address festival stakeholder issues, management strategies, and the potential sustainability of the event. Andersson and Getz (2008) also refer to Freeman’s (1984) conceptualisation of ST, when the author provides a framework depicting the links between the firm (at the centre) and the different stakeholders (around the firm). These stakeholders include owners, suppliers, employees, competitors, customers, governments, and local community organisations.

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ST has also been used in the context of wine and food festivals. In this domain, Hede (2008) highlights the significance of festival-participant relationships. First, the author acknowledges that, while the theory proposes that all stakeholders are important in the same way, relationships between the 'central organisation' represented by the food and wine festival, and the food, hospitality and wine industries is critical to its success. Importantly, to achieve effectiveness, relationships between this central organisation and its stakeholders have to be reciprocal (Hede, 2008). Thus, in the case of a food and wine event, the organising entity, represented by a food and wine trail, a wine association, or a designation of origin, not only has a vested interest in showcasing the best products of the region, but also in providing a memorable experience. As some studies suggest (e.g., Cole & Chancellor, 2009; Robinson & Clifford, 2012; Tanford, Montgomery, & Hertzman, 2012), the provision of valued tangible as well as intangible elements could generate attendance, repeat visits, more sales, or overall enhanced destination image. Moreover, such provision heavily depends on the synergies among stakeholders, or between the participating businesses and the 'central organisation' Hede (2008).

Furthermore, while festivals are intended to support the food, hospitality and wine sectors, they are also dependent on these sectors to achieve their own sustainability (Hede, 2008). Earlier work by Hede (2007) explains the links between TBL and ST. Based on the theory, the author proposes that, by emphasising the economic, social, and environmental effects of events (TBL), these can then be managed to improve the outcomes of those stakeholders involved. In her research, Hede (2007) also recognises that, while tourism research adopting ST can be applied to special events, the notion of collaboration and stakeholders among individuals or groups has not been extensively promoted in the domain of special events.

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The present study seeks to address this important point. In doing so, the study adopts ST to examine the extent of collaboration among food and wine event stakeholders. In addition, the study investigates ways in which food and wine stakeholders contribute to the welfare of their community.

Summary of Jumilla and the studied event

Jumilla is a town located in the region of Murcia, Spain (Figure 1). Contact established with Jumilla's town hall in 2014 confirmed that 25,710 residents live in the town. The study was conducted during the eighth edition (2013) of Jumilla's Gastronomic Days. The event runs between November 1 and December 1 each year. Further, it is supported by the local wine trail association, and by the participation of local businesses, such as wineries, olive groves and restaurants. Based on information gathered during the study, during the five weeks, restaurants offer special menus, showcasing local gastronomy and wines, while wine bars and cafés offer tapas and drinks that also emphasise the local products, particularly wines. Similarly, participating wineries and olive groves provide tastings, sometimes combined with tapas or other small dishes. At the same time, there are educational activities, including small tours around wineries and olive groves.

Figure 1 about here

Subsequent contact established with Jumilla's town hall (September of 2015) to learn the approximate numbers of outside visitors patronising the event. However, the information the town hall provided combined visitors to both the Gastronomic Days and 'Music among Wines', an event mainly celebrated at local wineries each year, between May 30th and July 18th. The data received states that, in 2011 an estimated 1,181 people participated at both events. This number increased in 2012 (1,375 visitors), and then declined in 2013 (1,050). While seemingly modest, these numbers are collected by the local tourism office, and may not necessarily capture all visitors to the Gastronomic Days. Participants of the present study recognised that the event was increasingly attracting more outsiders, particularly from

Murcia, some 70 kilometres away. Participants also acknowledged that the Gastronomic Days were beneficial in terms of increased onsite consumption and sales. Indeed, the timing of the event allowed businesses, including restaurants and wineries to ‘accumulate’ revenues in anticipation of the month of January, which is generally viewed as very modest in terms of visitor numbers.

Reflecting figures of other parts of Spain, it was found that, in 2014 the unemployment rate in Jumilla was around 30%. While culinary tourism or events may not entirely alleviate socio-economic problems, these activities can, however, have a positive influence on the local community, the region, and broadly on society. Some of the potential benefits include a) creating seasonal work for unemployed individuals, or keeping existing jobs, b) help sustain the livelihood of local families, c) help maintain existing food preparation and food production cultures and traditions, and d) improve the image of the region as a gastronomic destination.

METHODOLOGY

Theoretical framework

The definitions, conceptualisations, and the central theses of ST suggested in the literature (e.g., Donaldson & Preston, 1995; Kochan & Rubinstein, 2000) appear to apply in the case of the showcased event, particularly given the involvement of different stakeholders. More specifically, based on ST’s theses (Donaldson & Preston, 1995), as well as on research highlighting different stakeholders of culinary tourism (Cavicchi et al., 2013; Hede, 2008), Figure 2 provides a conceptualisation of these two elements in the case of Jumilla’s Gastronomic Days. As illustrated, the wine trail association is assumed to be the ‘firm’ in this research, as it is the driving force behind the management and execution of the event.

Previous research (Jawahar & McLaughlin, 2001; Kochan & Rubinstein, 2000) illustrates that

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the corporation can take different forms, with ‘the firm’ or ‘the organisation’ being the adopted terms in place of the corporation. In addition, given their involvement and potential contribution to the event and the local community in various ways, the participating businesses are regarded as the event’s main stakeholder group. Together, these stakeholders associated with and participating at Jumilla’s event will be investigated through the lens of ST.

Figure 2 about here

Methods and data collection

Aligned with previous research, where ST is considered to study stakeholders in special events (e.g., Hede, 2007, 2008), the present study adopts ST framework in the context of Jumilla’s Gastronomic Days. In addition, the usefulness of TBL, also referred to in Hede’s work (2007) is considered and incorporated. As outlined in the afore-mentioned research questions, the main themes under examination relate to the extent of stakeholders’ collaborative relationships, perceptions of the impacts of such relationships, and contribution of the participating businesses to the local community.

In order to explore these themes in-depth, a qualitative research approach was chosen. First, an Internet search identified Jumilla’s Town Hall, as well as other websites, including that of the local wine trail association (www.rutadelvinojumilla.com/v2/ing/) and other local businesses. These sources contained information related to the event, and the names of various participating businesses. Second, to learn more in-depth about Jumilla’s gastronomic event and its stakeholders’, a decision was made to complete the data collection stage on-site, that is, at businesses’ premises. Third, and for the same reasons, initial contact was established by email with 11 businesses identified in the event’s website as participants. The

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owners and managers of four of these businesses, two wineries, one olive grove and one restaurant replied and accepted the invitation to partake in the study.

Following the researcher's travel to Jumilla in mid-November of 2013, semi-structured, face-to-face, in-depth interviews were conducted with the owners and managers of these businesses. Various studies investigating opportunities and challenges of events (e.g., Hall & Sharples, 2008; Hede, 2007), as well as TBL in the context of events (Hede, 2008) were consulted in designing the interview questions. For example, and aligned with RQ1, respondents were invited to comment on the state of collaboration among the participants to the Gastronomic Days: "Please indicate the level of collaboration, if any, which exists among the different businesses participating in the Gastronomic Days." In addition, one question sought to learn the perceived impacts from collaboration: What benefits, if any, are resulting from collaboration among the different participating businesses? Another question asked respondents to comment on the ways in which their business contributed to the local community: "To what extent, if any, is your business contributing to the well-being of the local community?" Together, these questions were perceived to identify elements associated with the areas under investigation, including collaboration among the stakeholders, impacts, and contribution to the local community.

Clearly, compared to the nearly 33 businesses that are involved in the Gastronomic Days, the number of participating businesses in the study (four) is limited, and therefore, the overall results are treated with caution. However, earlier research conducted on wine tourism development (Wargenau & Che, 2006) underlines the usefulness and validity of a reduced sample of participating businesses. Despite the acknowledged limitation in this study, the four businesses represent a very important informant group. All these respondents have at least one decade of experience working in Jumilla, and are therefore are very knowledgeable about

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their business, community, and the event. Importantly, the four businesses have been participating in the event since its establishment. At the time of the interviews, the restaurant owner was the chairperson of the local wine trail association, the entity organising Jumilla's Gastronomic Days. In the case of the olive grove, this family business is now run by its fifth generation of family entrepreneurs. Further efforts were made to gather data from other event participants; however, despite direct communication from the chairperson to the wine trail association's members, no further participations were attained while the researcher visited Jumilla.

All interviews were conducted in separate days, in Spanish language by the researcher, who is bilingual (English-Spanish), and recorded in audio files with respondents' agreement. Two of the four interviews were approximately 120 minutes long, a third 180, and the fourth at the olive farm took place an entire afternoon. In this case, the interview time included a visit to the over 300-hectare large olive grove. The travel to Jumilla over a five-day period was also complemented by visits to other businesses, such as local restaurants, olive groves, wineries, and one food cooperative, which grows a local pear variety used in local recipes, including by the participating restaurant. An additional eight interviews were conducted among these businesses. While these respondents acknowledged that their businesses did not take part in the event, the comments gathered provided additional and valuable insights about local gastronomic/food stakeholders and their views on their businesses' involvement, including through socio-economic contributions. Furthermore, in the cases of three local restaurants, one olive farm and one winery, the respondents considered becoming part of the gastronomic event in future editions. The average time of each of these complementary interviews was 40 minutes.

The content of the interviews was transcribed verbatim, and translated back into English by the researcher. Table 1 provides a break-down of all the participants, both the group involved in the event, and those not involved at present; the table also shows how respondents' comments were labelled in the following sections.

Table 1 about here

RESULTS

Collaboration: Extent and impacts

In regards to the examined research questions, collaborative interests among participants emerged as a key element, with all four participants strongly emphasising the different benefits that had already been achieved, as well as those that were not tangible, but nevertheless contributed to the benefit of all participating stakeholders. First, as the leader of the local wine trail association, R1 stated:

“As the chairperson of this wine trail, I have always believed that union is very important... We have realised that, by being united, we are much stronger. This wine trail has grown because there has been union among participating stakeholders. I have tried to serve as a link between the wineries and other participating businesses, and we have obtained important achievements as a result of our union. I have completed much of the work involved in the association myself... my personality pushes me to motivate others to complete tasks, to achieve goals.”

Based on comments gathered among other participants, the leadership role taken by R1 had positive impacts, particularly in bringing other stakeholders together. Indeed, during the interviews participants referred to R1's year-long commitment to organise meetings at his restaurant, devoting time and energy to help establish a wine tourism and gastronomic culture and foundation. This overall finding is in alignment with ST, namely, concerning the descriptive/empirical thesis (Donaldson & Preston, 1995). Further, the connection between

respondents' involvement and intentions to achieve goals through the celebration of the festival and culinary tourism, and that of stakeholder management suggest alignment with the instrumental thesis. According to Wood and Gray (2000), given that collaboration focuses on objectives, those engaged in collaboration should make decisions or 'act.' Such intention to act also has implications for stakeholder management, and for the achievement of goals, a fundamental one being the contribution toward the socio-economic development of Jumilla's community and region.

These collaborative relationships also appear to be in agreement with various aspects related to TBL, as discussed by Hede (2007). OF1, for instance, acknowledged: "*Our olive grove, [Name of] winery and [Name of] restaurant form a 'natural' gastronomic route.*" The respondent further explained how these businesses were taking advantage of their proximity, working together to offer a food and wine trail located in the outskirts of Jumilla, thus, serving as a link between the rural area and the town, where other attractions, both gastronomic or historic/architectural, are located. The significance of collaborative stakeholder relationships within members of the wine and food trail became evident among other respondents, with W1 recognising:

"We also collaborate with other wineries, especially with those integrated in the local wine route, generating ideas, organising events, etc... We also offer an activity involving wine tasting and food pairings, whereby one of the restaurants participating in the wine route visits us to conduct a wine tasting and pair the wine with tapas it has prepared... we are always looking for ways to collaborate with businesses that belong to or are associated with the wine route... Building synergies with other members of the wine route is important for us; collaborative activities have grown in the last few years. Increasingly, we receive requests from wine trail members for different activities; we are

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also interested in doing more because these forms of collaboration also represent or add value to consumers' experience..."

This respondent's perceptions are strongly associated with the aspect of reciprocity Hede (2008) mentions as paramount in order to build effective relationships. Reciprocity is also highlighted by W2's comment, as well as the potential to achieve some of the elements of TBL, particularly socio-economic sustainability: *"We have our internal stakeholders, who are not investors but grape growers providing us with the 'raw product' to make wines. They have always supported the initiative to be involved in Jumilla's wine route. In fact, they are heavily involved in the (wine route) project. For example, when we receive requests for vineyards visitation, our members regularly ask us to send people to their own vineyards, and a very high percentage is very supportive of our wine tourism project."*

The comments from various participants also identified opportunities to link the 'organisation', as well as Jumilla's food and gastronomy well beyond Murcia's or even Spain's borders. Regarding this aspect, R1 mentioned that through networking with local government officials, the event- and Jumilla's wine and gastronomy- are now being promoted outside Spain, including in the Czech Republic, where the Spanish ambassador was disseminating information pertaining to these offerings. In addition, OF1 also indicated his business's contribution in a similar way: *"Tourism is one of the themes I am passionate about. When we go to promotional campaigns at a fair, we always invite people to visit us, to come here so that they learn about this area..."*

Given the apparent high degree of collaboration among businesses adhering to the Gastronomic Days, as well as the benefits accrued, not surprisingly, a high degree of interest was perceived among various, currently non-participating businesses. This finding also suggests the 'collateral' impact resulting from collaboration. The finding also underlines the

significance of existing positive relationships between the ‘organisation’ (Jumilla’s wine trail association), and the different stakeholders, both participants and non-participants, and is aligned with the work of Hede (2007, 2008). For instance, during the interviews several restaurateurs (R2, R3, and R4) whose businesses were not part of the wine trail at the time the study was conducted expressed their interest to partake in future editions. The opportunity to showcase their facilities and products, together with the potential to generate more business were at the centre of their motivations to join the trail. CO1 recognised business opportunities from opening the cooperative to visits from groups, including business people interested in learning, consuming and buying the region’s products. While CO1’s cooperative was not participating in Jumilla’s Gastronomic Days, he underlined the importance of and the linkages between the local food production, the local gastronomy, and the event.

Due to such limitations as lack of facilities, or perceived marginal gains from opening to the public, OF2, OF3, W3, and W4 were currently unable to join both the trail and event.

However, they recognised the importance of the ‘organisation’ or wine trail association and its initiatives to strengthen Jumilla’ gastronomic identity.

Stakeholders’ contribution to Jumilla’s community

The content of the interviews identified respondents’ contributions to their community, and various links between their comments and some of the theses of ST proposed by Donaldson and Preston (1995). For example, the usefulness of the normative thesis emerged, with some of the responses underlining a genuine interest in practical and procedural aspects, particularly in their efforts to improve the burgeoning local culinary tourism industry. This apparent genuine desire and intention to contribute to Jumilla’s increased recognition was another key emerging thread in the present study.

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In terms of the food products featured both by the hospitality and local food producing organisations, CO1, W1, W2, OF1, and R1 interchangeably mentioned the cases of the locally grown Ercolini pear, the higher quality of the local olive oils, the diversification of olives into other products (soaps, beauty products, tapenades, etc.), as well as the Monastrell grapes, the base for the increasingly popular [Monastrell] wines. Together, these products directly and indirectly contribute to Jumilla's prosperity, including by providing work, both in the production fields and in hospitality operations, in promoting the region, particularly helping position Jumilla as a culinary destination.

In the case of the Ercolini pear, CO1 explained that, originally from Italy, this food gained designation of origin (DO) status, a certification that producers obtained following specific quality standards, in this case, prescribed by the local pear producers' cooperative. CO1 agreed that pear growing helped maintain primarily small productions predominantly owned by families residing in the town/region. The DO certification also helped identify Jumilla as a food producing region. Further, the participant referred to the traditional value to showcase the pear in Jumilla's gastronomy, for instance, as a local dessert. This point was supported by R1, a key informant, with many years of experience leading the local wine trail and one of Jumilla's most known a-la-carte restaurants: "*... we feature the Ercolini pear in our restaurant's menu, poached in two different wines.*"

The aspects highlighted by the normative thesis (Donaldson & Preston, 1995) were also apparent through specific initiatives designed to enhance the profile of Jumilla's gastronomy, its culinary tourism, thus, illustrating participants' contribution to the region. R1 commented on the developments of the local wine trail, and the wider socio-economic implications: "*...since we started with the wine trail some 10 years ago, I was looking to growing my*

business. With my modest contribution, I can help create a tourist destination here ... Before, only very few people ventured in this region to visit a winery; wine tourism did not exist...”

The managerial thesis (Donaldson & Preston, 1995) also aligns with the findings, namely, in relation to ST’s usefulness in recommending structures, practices, and attitudes conducive to stakeholder management. This element can be suggested through comments emphasising the profound changes in the wine and food growing sectors in the last decade. These changes have triggered improvements in brand image, progressively placing Jumilla on Spain’s culinary map (R1): “... since 2012, we have had 19,000 visits to our local wineries. This number does not include those visits to our Gastronomic Days (between 2,500 and 3,000), but these visitors are nevertheless involved in consumption of local wine and food. Many of these people may go and visit a local museum or a castle, and then become involved in the local gastronomy.” The economic spill-overs can be significant, as suggested by W2: “For us, wine tourism represents value added; wine tourists are not the best segment for our business, but it is the most profitable.” The respondent was also referring to visitors’ profile during the weeks of the Gastronomic Days; visitation and potential positive word-of-mouth could also contribute to the enhancement of Jumilla in the eyes of other travellers.

Other findings relate to the extension of the wine and food products beyond their commodity status. OF1, for instance, was already diversifying his olive farm, and adding value to his olive products. The respondent was developing a rural tourism operation in the middle of the olive farm, located in an area where rich fauna and flora coexist. These current developments could further contribute to improving the image and ‘branding’ of Jumilla. Moreover, OF1 acknowledged hiring local residents for the farm’s daily operations, harvests, and other activities throughout the year. Now involved in diversifying into tourism, OF1 expected to involve local residents more, both in terms of education and labour. On a similar note, R1

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referred to alternative avenues to combine this product with other forms of leisure: *“We have an aesthetician here in Jumilla, who does wine therapy... Here you have an additional product on offer, which can easily be associated to a hotel, a restaurant... and all this [wine related development] keeps growing. We have a local museum associated with the wine trail, a private museum, featuring an Easter theme. This museum works independently, but is associated with our wine trail.”*

Again, all these developments can help promote the region and town as a package, which not only emphasises food or wine, but also side events and activities attached to the region and town. In doing so, businesses may also benefit from increased patronage, more direct sales, and future patronage. In this regard, an earlier study (Boyne, Hall, & Williams, 2003) highlights the increasing number of initiatives using locally produced foods and beverages to develop regional tourism. According to the authors, these initiatives can result in enhancing the sustainability of the production of local foods, and strengthen the region’s tourism products. The perceived positive impacts of the Gastronomic Days are also illustrated in the addition of other events to extend the calendar year of activities such as Music among Wines (W2): *“The wine calendar has two important dates, one of them being between May and July; in this event, there are music concerts performed at local wineries. This event, which is primarily organised for people to travel to local wineries, also entails a winery visit, followed by a wine tasting and finger food.”*

The interviews also confirmed that all the participating businesses employ local labour full-time, and occasionally part-time or seasonal employees (e.g., OF1), also local. Thus, keeping employment in an already difficult job market was a direct way in which the participating businesses are benefitting Jumilla’s community. The potential for creating or maintaining employment through culinary tourism has also been discussed by Henderson (2011). Finally,

participants perceived future growth and success of Jumilla's event and culinary tourism; such growth may contribute to more employment opportunities to cater for increased visitor demand during or after the event.

CONCLUSIONS

The potential benefits of culinary events have been increasingly discussed in the academic literature. These events can provide opportunities for a number of stakeholders, including food growers, service and product providers. For example, the literature refers to increasing positive word-of-mouth, elevating the image of the region, and developing brand awareness about the region's products are some potential benefits (Carlsen, 2002; Hall & Sharples, 2008, Park, Reisinger, & Kang, 2008). In presenting the case of Jumilla's Gastronomic Days through the lens of ST and the TBL concept, the present study sought to contribute to the existing literature on culinary events. Face-to-face, in-depth interviews were conducted among several of the event's stakeholders; additionally, eight businesses currently not involved in the event were interviewed.

The study makes several contributions. In terms of accumulated knowledge, the findings demonstrate the importance of the involvement of various local stakeholders involved in the event in collaborative relationships. Importantly, the leading role and initiative undertaken by the organisation (wine trail association) is highlighted. The efforts of this key stakeholder, as well as other participants in helping build the Jumilla 'brand,' both during and beyond the gastronomic event were identified in many comments. For instance, individual initiatives (e.g., OF1, R1) appear to be drawing the attention of domestic, as well as overseas consumers, particularly through educational, promotional and culinary tourism related activities.

Participants also mentioned benefits accruing from the event for their businesses, including in increasing sales prior to 'weaker' business periods, such as in January. Not surprisingly, other

interviewees currently not involved in the event demonstrated their desire for direct involvement in future editions.

The study makes an additional contribution in adopting ST and TBL in the context of food and wine festivals, and culinary tourism; to date, very few researchers have sought to develop both ST and TBL in such contexts. For instance, some of the findings directly align with ST research by Donaldson and Preston (1995), in particular with four theses they proposed, namely, descriptive/empirical, instrumental, normative, and managerial. Also aligned with ST research (Donaldson & Preston, 1995; Hede, 2007) was the importance of collaborative relationships, which emerged as a key element in the development and execution of the gastronomic event. Similarly, the findings are also partly in agreement with Hede's (2007, 2008) research. For example, Jumilla's wine trail association (the organisation) and other stakeholders appear to have developed effective reciprocal relationships, with potentially positive impacts for the long-term socio-economic sustainability of the event, the town and the region.

IMPLICATIONS

Overall, the findings have practical and theoretical implications. From a practical perspective, the findings have important implications for Jumilla, as well as for other Spanish regions, and for the establishment and sustainability of food and wine events. Moreover, through collaboration, and the contribution of local businesses and food growers, culinary events may attain long-term sustainability, and benefit a wide range of stakeholders. The survival of the Gastronomic Days, showcasing the 10th edition in 2015, suggests that, to a great extent, collaborative relationships among the different local stakeholders are vital to sustain a culinary event in the long-term.

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From a theoretical perspective, particularly the descriptive/empirical thesis (Donaldson and Preston, 1995), it could be argued that both businesses have both competitive and collaborative interests with clear intrinsic value, namely, to build synergies for the benefit of the stakeholders involved. The work by Kochan and Rubinstein (2000) also appears to fit in this context, underlining what is needed for long-term sustainability of stakeholder businesses. Collaborating, even at a relatively small scale could contribute to a variety of initiatives. As the case of the local olive farm and winery underline, such small-scale collaborative efforts can contribute to the creation of short gastronomic routes, where various industries merge, with potentially mutually beneficial outcomes for the participating stakeholders. Given the geographic composition of many Spanish rural areas, or Mediterranean regions, where olives, vineyards, and other crops coexist, collaborating across industries, and also with hospitality businesses could create long-term sustainable synergies, thus, aligning in some respects with the objectives of the TBL (Hede, 2007).

Along these lines, and mirroring the current economic situation of many Spanish or Mediterranean regions, Jumilla is facing a very serious crisis, with close to 30% unemployment rate within the local population. While gastronomic events and wine tourism only represent one form of regional development, and will not alleviate Jumilla's problems in the short term, the town and region need to develop strategies and alternatives to energise the local economy. In this context, culinary and wine tourism can go a long way. For instance, in the ninth (2014) edition, free visits to the local museums, as well as to the Jumilla's main historical attraction, The Jumilla Castle (Jumilla's Town Hall, 2014) were organised. This development contributes to integrating the local gastronomy, arts, architecture and traditions to provide visitors with a wide range of experiences.

Furthermore, the findings clearly identified stakeholders' intentions to build the Jumilla 'brand' not only locally, but also beyond the region's confines, including internationally. These intentions are also supported by collaborative efforts through which the event could experience further growth, helping enhance Jumilla's brand, and, ultimately, benefitting from these achievements in the form of sales, and increased patronage. The above intentions are also partly aligned with the managerial thesis (Donaldson and Preston, 1995), which highlights stakeholder management through recommended structures, attitudes and practices. Together, these potential benefits can spill-over into the community, which might benefit, among other forms, from resulting employment opportunities, allowing some of the residents to stay in the region, or continue traditions and activities they have undertaken for generations, including producing foods. These elements are also closely related to the foundation of TBL (e.g., Hede, 2007). In fact, in these times of crisis, collaboration among different businesses could help maintain or even strengthen a sense of community in the area/town.

Based on the perceived benefits from participating and collaborating, an additional implication emerges. Moreover, by helping build a sustainable gastronomic event through collaboration and involvement, other local businesses may also adhere to the event. The eight additional interviews conducted during the study with other hospitality and food producers in Jumilla clearly identified an interest among these businesses to be part in future editions of the Gastronomic Days. The expected product/service quality requirements from the event organisers (Jumilla's wine trail association) of those taking part at the event constitutes therefore an important implication. For example, in order to satisfy entry requirements, new participants may gain in various aspects, particularly in increasing their professionalism through training, learning about or implementing local recipes, learning foreign languages to cater for other visitor segments, or simply learning and incorporating more rigorous service

standards. A more professional hospitality industry can also result in direct benefits for the region, as perceptions of visitors and local consumers may be enhanced by higher standards of service and product delivery.

This last identified implication is also associated with both the normative and instrumental thesis of ST (Donaldson and Preston, 1995), and has also links to the TBL concept (Hede, 2007). The normative thesis, for instance, prescribes that stakeholders have genuine interests in ‘substantive’ aspects related to corporate activities (Donaldson and Preston, 1995). In the context of the present study, such aspects and interests relate to economic activities undertaken by participants, potentially enhancing the region’s brand image, and their own wealth. The instrumental thesis, on the other hand, emphasises potential connections between the achievement of profitability or growth and stakeholder management (Donaldson and Preston, 1995). In relation to the study’s findings, the organisation’s management of the participating stakeholders was found to successfully communicate the objectives of the event, and expectations placed upon the participants. Overall, the alignments above illustrate that, apart from identified practical implications of the study, examining stakeholders and the various potential outcomes from collaboration through the lens of both ST and the TBL concept could be very beneficial in facilitating understanding among academics and practitioners.

LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH

As noted previously, one of the study’s limitations is the small number of participants. However, given the challenges to meet and/or collect data from all 33 business owners and managers participating at the event, the achieved responses, complemented with other respondents from businesses that currently are not part of the wine trail association do provide valuable insights. Moreover, the four participants currently involved in the event are very

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experienced, knowledgeable, and reliable sources. As noted previously, one of the interviewees (R1) was at the time of the study chairing the organisation (wine trail association), a second (OF1) was the fifth generation of a local olive oil producing family, and the other two participants were involved in very well established local businesses.

At the same time, however, this aspect concerning participants' experience is also suggested as a further limitation. Indeed, an argument could be made that other local business owners/managers may be less experienced, including in their participation at the event, in engaging in collaborative relationships, or both. As a result, their perceptions might differ from those of the more experienced participants. A final recognised limitation is that the study does not include the views of 'frontline' stakeholders, or those employees working at establishments involved in the event.

The limitations of this study also suggest avenues for future research. Clearly, the number of respondents could be increased in future investigations focussing on stakeholders involved in food and wine events. Researchers could also use ST in the context of food and wine events, as well as in wine and food tourism broadly. One potential outcome is the confirmation or disconfirmation of the usefulness of the theory in such contexts, while another important outcome would be the further development of the theory.

Future studies could also delve into the TBL, including the focus on environmental sustainability, which did not emerge as a relevant element in this study in comparison to socio-economic sustainability. Future research could also focus on Jumilla's Gastronomic Days longitudinally. Doing so could help identify evolutionary patterns, for instance, as to whether or not collaboration is continuous, including collaboration among new participants. Research could also examine and compare business owners and managers who may be more

experienced in participating in the Gastronomic Days or in collaborative relationships versus the less experienced and their perceived impacts. Conducting this type of research could help identify the different outcomes that could potentially be achieved following each approach. Similarly, gathering the comments and views of employees working at establishments that are part of the Gastronomic Days could provide useful practical insights.

Overall, the study underlines the significance of collaboration in the context of food and wine events in rural areas. As illustrated previously (e.g., Duarte Alonso, 2014; Wargenau & Che, 2007), collaboration can generate significant opportunities; these opportunities may result in positive spill-overs for the local community, and for society in general. In particular, there are opportunities for the local business and their community in the form of celebration, consumption, potential employment, more recognition, enhanced destination image, and resulting increased visitation and revenues through quality consumers. Therefore, the future and continuous study of food and wine events is critical in order to uncover new insights that could positively affect those stakeholders involved in such events, and contribute to theory development.

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