



Researching the development of gastronomic tourism
The case of Naxos, Greece

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Abstract

In a time of crisis the quest for reinventing the economy is intensified and adoption of appropriate reforms is at the epicenter of debate. Tourism is one of the fastest developing contributor of revenues yet a sector that also faces considerable challenges. In recent decades gastronomic tourism has drawn the attention of many destinations as an alternative form with favorable characteristics. A mature tourist destination, Greece, has yet to take advantage of this market segment despite its attested high potential. Drawing from a relatively underdeveloped, yet growing academic subject this research intends to find what lies under an unfulfilled potential from a case of a tourist region in Greece. A literature framework that identifies themes of importance for the development of this tourism niche helps to form a qualitative research with the participation of local restaurateurs, which constitute an important group of stakeholders with a conveniently wide perspective that spans from food production to tourism consumption and in addition are the main recipients of a regional initiative on gastronomic tourism. Results underline the importance of mentality, practices, cooperation among stakeholders and promotion but also their interconnectivity and thus provide valuable knowledge for tourism planning.

Chapter 1. Introduction

1.1 Context and Research Problem

1.1.1 The Context. Tourism differentiation and gastronomic tourism

Tourism is at varying degrees a significant contributor of revenues for a great number of national and regional economies. Within the last sixty years, the sector has become a global 'industry' and despite its sensitivity to actual or perceived risks, overall it is one of the most resilient and fastest growing economic sectors and this trend is not expected to change (UNWTO, 2016). In certain tourism milieus and their respective services, the now mature destinations of Western Europe face increasing competition by emerging ones in their vicinity and beyond since the more efficient and inexpensive transportation permits that. In addition, various characteristics of mass tourism, among which high spatial concentration and seasonality, counterbalance any positive contributions of tourism as they impose a great cost as regards environmental, social and economic sustainability. Hence, as mass tourism becomes a less advantageous -or even desirable- arena of competition, in the last decades there is a shift by policy-makers towards other forms of tourism that are focused less on great numbers and more on high incomes, year-round loyalty, and in general on certain demands that are less likely to be fulfilled elsewhere. As the potential of mass tourism and its economic health are put into question, policy-makers particularly advocate the need for tourism-product diversification (Bramwell, 2003). The role of tourism in globalization is related to concerns regarding a 'McDonaldization' of culture, a term attributed to Ritzer (1993). This term, expresses a wider cultural homogenization that reflects the one in food and eating habits, an evident characteristic in the internationally established restaurant chain. Food however, constitutes an integral part of a destination's identity: "...the very fact that food is expressive of a region and its culture has meant that it can be used as a means of differentiation for a destination in an increasingly competitive global marketplace" (Hall & Sharples, 2003; p. 6).

The focus of the tourist activity on food has been identified with the terms “food tourism, culinary tourism, or gastronomy tourism and all have the same meaning: people travel to a specific destination for the purpose of finding foods” (Karim & Chi, 2010; p. 532). According to Hall and Sharples (2003), gastronomy tourism constitutes an experiential trip to a gastronomic region for recreational or entertainment motives that encompasses activities related to food (e.g. visits to food producers, fairs, festivals, cooking shows, tastings etc) that in essence requires the experimentation with and learning from different cultures and lifestyles. Nevertheless, tourists that visit a destination having gastronomy as partial or secondary motivation are also not excluded from the scope of gastronomic tourism indicating a more flexible definition that includes varying degrees of tasting cuisines of places or taking part in gastronomy related activities (UNWTO, 2012). In any case, it is rather not contested that the cuisine of a destination is a decisive factor as regards the quality of the holiday experience and this is also indicated, as specialized literature demonstrates, by the fact that over a third of tourist spending is devoted to food (ibid.).

1.1.2 Research Problem

The tourism sector is arguably one of the pillars of the Greek economy as it accounts for approximately 15% of national GDP. While an established “sun and beach” holiday destination, Greece however faces a deteriorating competitive position in its traditional markets while lags behind in emerging ones. In this respect, there have been calls for re-defining and re-focusing its tourist strategy (McKinsey, 2012). The ongoing economic crisis makes the need for re-inventing the country’s main sectors even more critical as it may offer solutions to the soaring unemployment rates, the emigration of highly-skilled young professionals and the overall gloomy development prospects. Austerity measures have been an additional factor of pressure against the competitiveness of Greek tourism due to increasing taxes in accommodation and catering services (To Vima, 2015).

The Greek cuisine on the other hand is well-established and popular with locals and foreigners and is characterized by its distinct character, the high nutritional value and freshness of its products and the simplicity in preparation while some of its classic ingredients that are produced there have a high profile and strong presence in international markets (olive oil, feta cheese, yogurt, honey etc.). Nevertheless, it is considered that Greek gastronomy is far from its potential due to problems in the quality of gastronomic services and the lack of effective promotion. Furthermore, there is -with few exceptions- limited provision of local cuisine especially in tourist areas and as a consequence tourists largely come into contact with a distorted image of the Greek cuisine that in many cases is defined by alienated tastes and character, low aesthetics of restaurants often offered at a high price (SETE, 2009). From all Greece, it is widely accepted that there are two cases, that of Crete and Santorini islands that have established a gastronomic identity. This is attributed, in the case of Crete, on the large agricultural production and large basis of restaurants that remain loyal to local cuisine and in the case of Santorini on the peculiarities of its environment and landscape along with a creative attitude towards local cuisine, offered by good quality restaurants. In both cases, cooperation of local stakeholders and efficient promotion to international media are attributed as success factors (ibid.). According to SETE (2009) Greece's presence as a gastronomic destination in international tour operators programmes, while notable, is rather small and largely regard -with few additions- Crete and Santorini. Gastronomic routes and tours are scarce and festivals focused on local gastronomy although numerous remain of local scale and interest.

The problem that is therefore identified is that in a context of a country where tourism plays a vital economic role the attested potential of many local destinations to attract more visitors, for whom local gastronomy matters highly as regards travel choices, remains unfulfilled.

1.1.3 Scope of the research

Within Greece, the Cyclades islands, is a case that combines the above characteristics. The Cyclades form a significant part of the Aegean archipelago that is the largest island complex in Europe- is the origin of some of the most iconic images of Greece and one of the most established tourist destinations internationally. The region's economy depends heavily on tourism as its contribution is estimated to vary between 50% and 90% of the Gross Regional Product (Buhalis, 1999). With the exception of the already mentioned Santorini, the rest islands are given much less attention as regards gastronomic tourism. Nevertheless, their potential is acknowledged and as such, there has been a regional initiative in order to develop its local gastronomic offer, namely the **Aegean Cuisine (AC)** initiative. Focusing on a wide range of restaurant standards, the AC now forms a network of professionals largely oriented towards gastronomy that reflects the local identity. In this respect, information drawn from this network's members (with the addition of restaurateurs that although non-members share similar characteristics) is likely to provide valuable insights as regards gastronomic tourism. The importance of restaurateurs' insight has been identified. Everett and Aitchison (2008) stress that "restaurant owners act as conduits between local producers and the visiting tourist, communicating with both groups, and being aware of local conditions and issues" (p.155) while Björk and Kauppinen- Räisänen (2014) add that restaurants transmit the local food culture and significantly enhance local economic development and identity.

As regards the geographic scope of the research, the Cyclades islands, further focus will be the case of Naxos. Naxos combines certain characteristics, presented in the Methodology section, that make it an appropriate case for this research.

1.1 Research aim and questions

In a country and region where tourism plays a vital role in the economy and where plenty resources for the development of gastronomic tourism are present, a research may help towards exposing reasons that hinder such a potential. With a theoretical framework drawn from bibliography, there have been identified elements that elevate a destination to a gastronomic one. Distinctiveness, preservation of traditional practices and ingredients and linkage with the locality (supply, community), cooperation amongst stakeholders at several levels and importantly optimal delivery, promotion and marketing to visitors seem to matter mostly. As such, the research on local restaurateurs will shed light on problems that may exist so as to inform policy makers. The operation of the AC initiative will also be considered under these parameters and hence provide valuable insights for its development.

In order to reach this aim, the research question employed is:

If gastronomic tourism is to develop, what are the reasons that might hinder this potential?

In order to direct the research question towards parameters that according to the literature constitute a strong basis for gastronomic tourism it is broken to further sub-questions:

- *What is the state of the connection of the gastronomic offer with the local production, cuisine and community?*
- *How is the gastronomic aspect of the destination promoted to (potential) visitors?*
- *What is the state of cooperation amongst stakeholders as regards delivery of the local gastronomic offer?*
- *What has been the impact of the AC initiative in these aspects?*

1.2 Societal and scientific relevance of the research

The societal relevance of this research is attributed to the importance of tourism internationally and more particularly in Greece while the focus on one of its facets, gastronomy, -that also forms a niche- is connected with the pursuit of regional development, competitiveness, differentiation as well as preservation of local identity and culture. These issues are very topical especially in a context of ongoing crisis and a quest for reinventing the economy. Having beneficial effects on local communities that go beyond the tourist services' sector as opposed to mass and rather unsustainable forms, finding answers as regards possible problems that hamper the development of gastronomic tourism is valuable knowledge for policy makers and authorities at different ends of governance from the municipal to the national level (particularly in planning and tourism departments).

The scientific relevance of the research on the other hand is attributed to the way in which it aspires to contribute to knowledge about the development of gastronomic tourism. Stemming from a literature framework of previous research it combines attributes that affect gastronomic tourism, i.e. connection with the locality, cooperation among stakeholders and promotion and then juxtaposes them with the AC initiative. As the literature review that follows will also demonstrate, empirical research conducted on local restaurants may offer a valuable contribution to knowledge and incentive for further research. As Björk and Kauppinen-Räsänen (2014) note, particularly local food as a means of gastronomic experience deserves more scholarly attention. Furthermore, and perhaps more importantly, exploring the topic of gastronomic tourism from a case in Greece also adds to the scientific relevance of the research since as already mentioned the field started to develop there only recently and studies are scarce or non-existent.

Chapter 2. Theoretical framework

Introduction

This chapter begins with a general look on the quest for differentiation in the tourist model from the mass to the more specialized and eventually to gastronomic tourism. Dimensions that define gastronomic tourism and its essential attributes are then discussed while afterwards the focus is directed towards its connections with regional identity and image that in turn expose its connection with locality. What follows is a presentation of approaches to gastronomic policies formation and implementation and in addition a review of the policy context in Europe and the research area along with the necessary presentation of the Aegean Cuisine initiative. A last paragraph provides an account of the main concepts upon which this research will be based and further build upon.

2.1 Mass tourism and the need for differentiation

From the late 1950s, the access of wider social classes to the warm waters and sunshine-rich coastlines of the Mediterranean gained international tourism a mass character as contrasted to the respective elite of previous, pre-war decades (Bramwell, 2003). As Bramwell (2003) notes, consecutively from Spain and then to Italy, then the Greek islands and former Yugoslavia, Cyprus, Malta and finally by the 1980s to Turkey, the development of the tourism industry “has spread through a succession of poles of high growth, and its present distribution is highly uneven between and within countries, regions and localities” (p. 4). High volume mass tourism, as defined by the sun and sea character of the tourism product it is attached to, is rather highly seasonal but also spatially concentrated, as tourism facilities are largely clustered in the vicinity of seaside resorts (ibid.). This holiday product aiming at a price-sensitive type of European consumer that constituted the ‘mass’ model, entered a period of crisis in the last decades of the 20th century, a crisis attributed to higher consumer demands, the increased interest for cultural dimensions, higher wealth standards, new habits, concerns for the environmental

resources, and changes in the social, demographic and cultural profile of families, and gave rise to a new type of consumer, and respectively to the demand for a new type of tourist product (Aguilo et al., 2005).

Following trends that initially appeared in northern European destinations, that of resort decline due to demand-side tendencies, shifts in holiday habits and demographics, Mediterranean resorts also had to face internal (e.g. decreasing share and volume of the domestic holiday market) and external threats (competition from emerging destinations) in both instances suggesting a connection with the resort lifecycle evolutionary model developed by Butler (1980) according to which destinations grow, stagnate and decline through a series of stages (Agarwal, 2002). As Aguilo et al. (2005) point out, although this model concerns a hypothetical cycle, it is a valid warning for those involved in tourism planning since destinations are not set to last forever unless they adapt to new challenges. Such a challenge is presented by Poon (1993, cited by Aguilo et al., 2005) who contrasts the “old tourist” who is “inexpert, standard and mass tourist” and prone to package holidays with the “new tourist” who is more “experienced, spontaneous, distinct and ecologically sensitive”. As such, more individualized and flexible forms of tourism are more suitable for this ‘post-Fordist’ tourist, in principle wealthier, better educated, more explorative and appreciative towards different cultures and the environment (Feifer, 1985 cited by Bramwell, 2003).

Nevertheless, the mass tourism model entering a phase of decline, does not necessarily suggest a linear and inevitable process since destinations are complex enough so that different stages in their evolution may co-exist (Hovinen, 2002). Thus, it has been argued that sun and sea destinations and adaptation to advanced expectations that are defined more by individual needs do not necessarily entail incompatibility but is a rather possible development through the introduction of innovations that enrich and differentiate the existing tourist product (Aguilo et al., 2005). Benur and Bramwell (2015), suggest that diversification may involve combinations of existing and new tourism products, either mass, niche or ‘alternative’, that attract new markets while attaining existing ones. For destination managers and planners who are interested in the utilization of tourism as a means of economic development, the niche tourism approach appears more effective

towards promoting sustainability and attracting high-spending tourists (Robinson & Novelli, 2005). Niche tourism may be broken down firstly into large market sectors such as cultural tourism, rural tourism, sport tourism etc., which in turn may be further segmented into micro-niches (ibid.). One such niche is gastronomic tourism.

2.2 The gastronomic tourism niche

The relationship between food and tourism has been described by a number of terms: from the more generic 'food tourism', and the widely used 'culinary tourism' and 'gastronomy or gastronomic tourism', to the lesser-used and more specialized 'cuisine tourism', 'tasting tourism', 'gourmet tourism', and 'restaurant tourism' (Williams, Williams Jr. & Omar, 2014). These terms, although do present differences in their definitions, all indicate tourists that are characterized by a high interest in food that is furthermore among their motivations to travel (Lee, Scott & Packer, 2014). Following on from Kivela and Crotts (2005), in this dissertation the term gastronomic tourism will be employed, for which the authors refer to as "travelling for the purpose of exploring and enjoying the destination's food and beverage and to savor unique and memorable gastronomy experiences" (p.42). Since eating while on vacation is an essential need, there has been concern as regards discerning the actual gastronomic tourist. It has therefore been underlined that the degree of motivation that food entails in conducting a trip is essential, meaning that lower motivation does not constitute a gastronomic tourist (Hall & Sharples, 2003; Quan & Wang, 2004). The Enteleca Research and Consultancy (2000) goes even further and classifies the market of gastronomic tourism in five groups, according to their involvement with the destination's cuisine: 'food tourists' (no more than 8% of the market) are the most committed since seeking local food has a central role in their travel choices, 'interested purchasers' (as much as 33% of the market) are often the most active buyers of local food as they consider it a significant contribution to their enjoyment, the 'un-reached' merely express a positive attitude towards trying local food in the future, while finally, the 'un-engaged' and the 'laggards' are either indifferent or respectively negative towards local food purchase. The existence of a continuum of gastronomic tourists seems to be affirmed

by other studies and regardless the number and label of classifications they are also on the basis of food's centrality in the travel decision process (Boyne, Hall & Williams, 2003; Hall & Sharples, 2003).

Besides the obvious importance of a destination's gastronomic offer for travelers who show a special interest in it and pursue gastronomic experiences, Björk and Kauppinen- Räsänen (2014) stress that local food is an important tourist attraction also for travelers with more casual attitude towards food and eating, therefore exceeding the narrow limits of a tourism niche. Through an earlier research, López-Guzmán and Sánchez-Cañizares (2012) have also supported that culinary-gastronomic food is an important contribution to general tourist satisfaction and behavior in case it is properly experienced and provided in the destination. In their findings from the research in Cordoba, Spain, the authors also noted that the tourists that appreciated the city's gastronomy more, were highly cultured and tended to stay longer than the average tourist, suggesting that gastronomic tourists constitute a coveted type of tourist for other destinations (López-Guzmán & Sánchez-Cañizares, 2012). The profile of the gastronomic tourist has been outlined by research agencies (TIA, 2007; Mintel, 2009; as cited by SETE, 2009; p. 14). According to the findings, gastronomic tourists predominantly belong in the age group of 30 to 50 and secondarily to the 51 to 64, they appear to be professionally acclaimed, with higher income and education than the average tourist, more adventurous and experienced as travelers, with higher interest for the destination's culture and they are likely to spend a greater proportion of their travel budget in gastronomic experiences. McKercher, Okumus and Okumus (2008), however, in their study on the importance of food tourism for visitors in Hong Kong, concluded that differences in the demographic characteristics or trip profile between culinary and non-culinary tourists were rather limited. Differences on the other hand, were related to the motivation behind food tourism, perceptions about Hong Kong as regards its gastronomic offer but also their self-perception as gastronomic tourists. As such, McKecher et al. (2008) related to contemporary market segmentation theory that promotes a 'values or benefits' segmentation over the traditional demographic. It is argued that the significance of food tourists as an important segment may be overestimated unless a more holistic view, that does not only contain food-related variables, is taken. Destination

choice is a complex procedure that involves a variety of tangible and intangible factors that should be taken into account (McKercher et al., 2008).

Kivela and Crotts (2005), confirm that gastronomy tourism is a 'meaningful and possibly highly loyal market segment' and as such it could be a viable alternative for new destinations that are not able to benefit from the 'sun and sea' model or lack the natural and cultural resources that attract visitors but also for established destinations as well. Also, if the food factor is able to affect the travel choices of a noteworthy market segment, then public and private investments that enhance and promote the gastronomic offer, is a likely strategy for destinations seeking to reinvigorate their tourism inflows and increase market share (Kivela & Crotts, 2005).

A factor of critical importance in gastronomic tourism is as Hall and Sharples (2003) highlight, the spatial connection of the product in the sense that tourists have to be physically present to the location of production so as to consume and become gastronomic tourists. Although the authors note that local production can of course be consumed elsewhere, this being another opportunity, in the form of exports, gastronomic tourism is actually the consumption of the local and the consumption and production of place. "It is for this reason that food tourism offers so much potential to reinforce local economies, encourage the conservation of food and bioversity, and help sustain local identities" (ibid., p. 11-12). This relationship of gastronomic tourism and local identity and destination image is discussed through relevant literature in the following sub-chapter.

2.3 Gastronomic tourism, destination image and local identity

Eating a natural or traditional product also entails the appropriation and embodiment of an area's nature, culture and identity and as such, food acts as a symbol and emblem (Bessiere, 1998). As "food can serve as a powerful vehicle for conveying deep-rooted meanings and abstract concepts that express and reflect the uniqueness of a specific place" it can be assumed that "place-specific food can assist the development of a tourism destination brand" (Lin, Pearson and Cai, 2011; p. 33). The significance of the cultural

dimension of food is evident in the inscription of relevant entries in Unesco's list of Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity, such as the Mediterranean diet and the traditional Mexican cuisine.

Despite the fact that national cuisines retain their distinctiveness, food tends to become more globalised and uniform, threatening the authenticity of experiences. On the other hand, tourists are more interested in local, authentic and original experiences connected to the places they visit and as such, foods can play a central role in re-inventing the brand image of places and creating distinctiveness, both at national and regional levels (OECD, 2012). According to Bessiere (1998) the construction of an "individual, collective and territorial identity" consists of culinary practices that are distinctive to a particular area and "promoting a specific gastronomic product by conserving skills and techniques leads to re-enacting history, re-approaching what has been lost and also helping to create, innovate and accept change" (p. 29).

Hall (2012), reports a range of advantages that a region/ destination may obtain by developing food tourism, including: opportunities for other regional businesses since foods and cuisines of high profile may attract more visitors, association with quality (culinary) products that create a positive image of the region, differentiation of the regional tourism product once there is linkage with local foods, and simply another dimension that enriches the tourist offer that already exists and therefore provides incentive for prolonging visitor stay and increasing expenditure on local products. As Fouassier (2012) notes, a prime gastronomic destination, France has been a pioneer in making food products act as a driving force for tourists to discover a place, in particular encouraged acquaintance with regional products at their places of origin and subsequently further capitalized gastronomic resources via enriching its offer and services (routes, events, exhibitions etc).

Kivela and Crofts (2006) provide evidence that favorable experiences of unique gastronomy are a major contributing factor to visitors' return desire and bound with the destination's image in multiple forms that in many cases are not fully comprehensible. Tsai (2016) engages with the connection between a positive food experience and attachment with the place where it takes place. As local foods and cuisines may transmit local history

and culture it can be said that they can be “an indispensable element of a memorable tourism experience and optimal medium for enabling tourists to acquire a clear understanding of a place” (Tsai, 2016; p. 1). Consumption of local foods, apart from increasing knowledge about the hosting culture also gives much more opportunities for tourists’ interaction with local people, a feature that has a positive effect on revisit and recommendation intentions. Overall, the author concludes that identification with, and/or strong attachment to local attractions comes as a result of positive and lasting memories that are created through experiencing local cuisines (ibid.).

According to Quan and Wang (2004) the mental distinction of the experience created between the local gastronomy when contrasted with the one(s) that visitors are familiar with in their daily lives (i.e. food from their home country or region) constitutes a “peak touristic experience”. Granted that existence of novel and enjoyable foods in combination with novel ways of delivery and/or consumption creates a gastronomic experience that evokes memorability and intensifies the total quality of the tourist experience, then it may be considered “peak” instead of “supporting” thus providing opportunities for the development of the destination as well as its image (Quan and Wang, 2004). Such opportunities, the authors stress, include revitalization of the local food production as it becomes a tourist attraction with added value itself, the incentive for the establishment of food-related events, but also the enhancement of the local identity of the destination community which eventually invigorate community participations necessary for a more sustainable tourism. The importance of the local food offer in a destination in the perception of its image by visitors is stressed by Sims (2009), in particular he acknowledges an association of local food with a destination that is defined by sustainability. Linkage of local foods and drinks with particular landscapes and farming methods have an impact on the perception of the destination by tourists: a pursuit of authenticity and meaningful connection with people and places that produce their food is far less probable to be fruitful in large scale, industrialized contexts (Sims, 2009). The connection of local foods with sustainability then in turn allows consumers/ tourists to associate themselves with a caring and responsible attitude towards the visiting destination (ibid.).

The gastronomic tourism experience consists of an array of attributes, among others the taste, variety, attractiveness of the food but also the environment and the quality of service, that the tourist evaluates juxtaposing with his/her expectations before reaching the destination (UNWTO, 2012). As such, satisfaction with several dimensions of a destination's gastronomic offer leads to visitor loyalty and consequently positive revisit intentions, in other words the destination's image is enhanced (ibid.). In their research focusing on three established gastronomic destinations, namely France, Italy and Thailand, Karim and Chi (2010) aimed at finding the correlation between visit intentions of tourists and their evaluations of particular dimensions of each country's food image. Food/cuisine (attributes of food, including quality, variety, presentation), restaurants/dining (pricing, variety, access, friendliness of personnel, menus in English) and food-related tourism activities (unique cultural experiences, street markets, existence of various activities such as cooking classes and farm visits etc) were the identified dimensions and their attributes that tourists evaluated and conclusions about the respective food images and visit intentions were made (Karim and Chi, 2010). Findings showed that food image was comparable with each country's real image and as such the established popularity of French and Italian cuisines as well as the reputation of their food and wine tours was re-affirmed through high evaluations of the respective attributes, as was Thailand's friendly service and affordable prices. Evaluations of the different dimensions revealed impact on visit intentions, for example negative in the case of the lagging of France in attributes of restaurants/dining and of Thailand in food/cuisine. Strong and weak points of each destination's food image stressed the need for differentiated strategy directions towards niche markets as regards the development of culinary products and marketing but also for improvement and better coordination in gastronomic dimensions that involve interaction with the tourists (ibid.).

Sparks, Wildman and Bowen (2000) also highlighted the importance of the restaurants' role in the development and maintenance of a tourist destination's image. They concluded that a positive evaluation of restaurants' attributes that apart from the obvious popularity of the food itself included a good service and suitability of location, ambience and atmosphere has a positive impact on the overall satisfaction of the tourist

experience in the destination, of which restaurants are an integral dimension. Sparks et al. (2000) also stress that restaurants enhance the destination's image via "their reputations, through that destination's culture, by adding variety, being unique and through the associated relaxing and indulgent lifestyle" (p. 15) and also provide a medium that connects the tourists with the local produce and community. Particular interest of certain market segments (e.g. of higher disposable income) and trends such as more tourists seeking different gastronomic experiences and who value food regionality are other parameters that add to the importance of the restaurant offer in the image of a destination (ibid.).

Through researching the case of a popular English destination, namely Cornwall, Everett and Aitchison (2008) suggested that food tourism may, among others, be of vital importance in strengthening a region's identity. As opposed to mass tourism that is accused for identity loss, environmental degradation and alienation of the local community,

food tourism offers an alternative means of local and regional development, with the potential to strengthen identity, enhance appreciation of the environment, encourage the regeneration of local heritage and the economy. (Everett and Aitchison, 2008; p. 164).

In particular they report food tourism's catalytic and multiple positive effects on traditional festivals, educational visitor attractions, consumers' relationship with the countryside, the preservation of agricultural and culinary practices and the revival of small-scale traditional industries and businesses. Additionally, the authors highlighted the contribution of food tourism in extending the tourist season as it was evident that beyond the peak season there was higher expenditure for local food. The formation of a regional identity that is defined by distinct local food produce is thus a factor that upgrades the tourist image to those tourists that are not only more prone to spend more but also do so beyond high season (Everett and Aitchison, 2008).

2.4 Gastronomic tourism strategy development and implementation

In order for a geographic entity to plan and implement a strategy for developing its food tourism potential, Hall (2012) underlines that a fundamental prerequisite is to determine the compatibility of cuisine, food and tourism with the overall economic development strategies of this particular entity. As such, food tourism's contribution to a destination's economic development should be investigated by involving agencies while the direction of policies is drawn through quality research and consideration of an array of viewpoints on food and tourism initiatives (Hall, 2012). Taking into account the differences in visitor demographics and backgrounds as well as in the types of food, tourism products, supply and value chains, the role of research is of prime importance (ibid.). For Cavicchi and Ciampi Stancova (2016) a 'one size fits all' approach when it comes to food and gastronomy plans is not appropriate and they stress how important is excellent knowledge of the local territory, its resources, stakeholders and advantages by policy makers.

This aspect is underlined by Bartella (2011) and is probably a good indication of the importance of peculiarities for each case, and of course of the one that is undertaken in this dissertation. Two cases of food tourism were investigated, one in Norway and one in Tuscany, Italy, in relation to different types of knowledge in food tourism. The multiple case study showed that for the development of food tourism in the Norwegian case scientific food knowledge and global managerial/ political knowledge were more important, while for the Italian case it was local food knowledge and local managerial/ political knowledge. It is thus underlined that any policy regarding food tourism is imperative to be based on the particularities of each *terroir*, namely a specific region's physical, socio-cultural and natural aspects (Bartella, 2011). Montanari and Staniscia (2009) also engage with *terroir's* importance when it comes to gastronomic tourism but from another perspective: they suggest that tourism and level of connection with quality agriculture constitute a way to sustainable development. In their research, they demonstrated that in the case of internal areas of central Italy, food and tourism were seldom part of a systemic production network and noted that for tourist use it is needed to "tie up the quality food to its 'terroir' in such a way that the relationship product-place of

production becomes indissoluble” (p. 1482). Successful cooperation in the various production phases requires respective cooperation among “terroir” stakeholders (farmers, entrepreneurs, communities) as regards aims and implementation (ibid.). This is also a concluding point of a research conducted in two destinations in Slovenia and Spain by Sanchez-Cañizares and Castillo-Canalejo (2015). In particular the authors support that coordination of those engaged directly or indirectly (eating establishments, travel agencies, hotels, local population, tourists, the public sector, and professional associations) is a prerequisite for implementing strategies that constitute a viable gastronomic tourism management that ultimately aims to improve destination competitiveness and regional development. The connection of the eating establishments with other stakeholders is deemed as particularly critical as it can play a vital role in the forming of identity in the destination image (Sanchez-Cañizares and Castillo-Canalejo, 2015). The theme of cooperation of the various food tourism stakeholders with different needs, incentives and challenges has also been employed by Everett and Slocum (2013) in order to evaluate what they considered as successful policy that intended to bring food and tourism together. By linking sustainability principles (coincidence with which suggests a successful policy outcome) with a model of certain emergent gastronomic tourism themes (knowledge exchange and networking, supply chain constraints, fear of change, regionalization of governing bodies and marketing) the authors conclude, with not great variations from the situation in England, Scotland and Wales, that food and tourism have yet to be coordinated so as to deliver local economies’ growth and job creation along with diversification and improvement of natural resources. Social capital development through unification of food tourism initiatives, promotion, distribution and policy integration therefore emerge as corrective directions (Everett & Slocum, 2013).

In relevance with place peculiarities and promotion Capatti (2012) highlights the importance of the connection of food with its production places and focuses on the means of implanting this connection to tourists. He uses the example of the Slow Food movement in Italy to stress that as in this case, similarly for tourists to appreciate gastronomy it is necessary for them to be educated in that direction because “language and the use of words” can be as essential as taste itself. As in the case of Slow Food, that in the last couple

of decades promotes a cultural approach that entails concern about the welfare of farmers, animals and plants and for gastronomy's rural background, awareness of food locality, production and cuisine are imperative in order for gastronomic tourism to exist at all (Capatti, 2012). As such, the author advocates the significance of 'educating' tourists about a certain gastronomic offer, by actions that enrich different facets of knowledge (e.g. geographical, economic, historical) so as to immerse themselves into the local culture and become attached to it. Fox (2007) also supports the significance of appropriate knowledge infusion and as such he uses the eloquent term '*gastrospeak*' that entails "a discursual practice embracing all verbal (spoken and written) representation of gastronomy-related topics and situations" that furthermore aims at the commodification and spectacularisation of a certain gastronomic identity (p. 547). A 'system of cognition', *gastrospeak* is for Fox (2007) a strategy that may help Croatian tourist destinations to reinvent their gastronomic identities.

Communicating the gastronomic offer of a destination essential as it may be is however a ground of different approaches that correspond to varying destination starting and targeting points. Okumus et al. (2013) demonstrate that in the case of four Caribbean islands, -Aruba, the Dominican Republic, Jamaica and Martinique- besides using their authentic cuisines for tourism promotion, also employ different marketing and promotional strategies: with Martinique acquiring the leading position in dynamic showcase of its cuisine's authenticity, history and fusions as well as organic farming and agri-tourism and the rest focusing to varying degrees to the different types of food, shortcomings were nevertheless exposed as regards narratives of exemplary food and drink experiences that visitors could engage in. Lack of dining offering combinations and more importantly lack of provision for different culinary groups -that besides pursuing different products they also tend to be approached by other promotional materials- were also noted by Okumus et al. (2013) as problematic points of the islands' tourism organizations' strategies that need to be taken into account in order to reach their potential as gastronomic destinations.

As regards the evaluation of gastronomic tourism initiatives, Ottenbacher & Harrington (2013) present the case of one of the top tourist regions in Germany, namely

Baden-Württemberg. Acknowledging that in order to assess success, a combination of measurable indicators (economic impacts) and more qualitative ones, such the already mentioned in the literature visitor satisfaction, revisit intentions and cultural sustainability, the authors present a set of issues that according to key stakeholders suggested an ideal gastronomy tourism initiative. The authors therefore conclude that the strategic process until its implementation needs to be based on a clear strategy, with a strong cooperation among stakeholders, under a unifying leadership, provision for invigoration of the regional profile, communication of quality standards and ability to promote regions as perceived by tourists (Ottenbacher & Harrington, 2013). Set in an Asia-Pacific destinations' context, Horng & Tsai (2012) similarly stress the importance of cooperation and creativeness among government, industries and local residents when it comes to the composition of marketing strategies in conjunction with optimal use of the heterogeneity of their resources and the unique local features that constitute a strong added value potential for a destination. For Fyall & Leask (2007) a destination product being a complex amalgam of various stakeholders and components, makes collaboration a central issue. Issues that range from day-to-day management to extreme crisis situations (as in the case of London and its boroughs the authors' research was based), extend way beyond the limits of a destination marketing organization and this means that in order to facilitate effective collaboration, destination management organizations need to act as a unifying force that brings all destination components together so as not to act in isolation (Fyall & Leask, 2007).

In their effort to draw a strategy for gastronomic tourism development in the Greek region of Central Macedonia, Iakovou, Vlachos & Aidonis (2009), conducted a thorough SWOT analysis that produced a plan with two main goals. The first is based on the region's existing gastronomic resources that have the potential to trigger the desirable market segment while the second is about empowering the food procurement via constructing strong collaborative networks of local stakeholders. Therefore, Iakovou et al. (2009) opt for investing in local stakeholders through cluster development and their ongoing education and training. The latter action is also valued by Horng & Tsai (2012) as they note that improvement of gastronomic tourism products and services, provision of diverse local

foods with profound cultural interpretations and ultimately the construction of a gastronomic image, require the aimed cultivation of hospitality professionals. As for the development of food clusters however, Lee, Wall & Kovacs (2015), based on a comparative case study of two Canadian destinations that adopt gastronomic tourism, argue that it “requires a clearly defined branding strategy to help create synergistic relationships between agriculture and tourism, and to harness supporting assets based upon the economic, cultural and environmental strengths of a place” (p. 143) as in this way local stakeholders are more probably motivated and mobilized.

2.5 Policy review

2.5.1 Policy context in Europe, Greece and the South Aegean Region

The potential of the agro-food sector in providing an array of regional development opportunities has attracted the interest of investors and regional stakeholders while other actors such as farmers’ organizations, co-operatives and public companies are expanding their engagement with the field (Cavicchi & Ciampi Stancova, 2016). The European Economic and Social Committee, advisory body of the EU and a link with civil society, has recently advocated that local development will benefit extensively from interconnections of regional food value chains with various economic sectors, thus linking food with crafts, agriculture, retailing and *tourism* (EESC, 2012). The Committee underlines the importance of the ‘regional rootedness’ of agriculture and crafts within a globalised economy and urges for adoption of adding value practices through synergies in rural tourism:

An approach based on value chains via increased cooperation between key rural players also makes it possible to gear the production and sale of foods to specific regional requirements and characteristics and create an unmistakable local identity. The development of regional umbrella brands for joint marketing reflects the growing demands of consumers as to the quality and origin of products. (EESC, 2012; p. 37)

Food and gastronomy have been the meeting point for the branding efforts and the pursuit of international visitors for networks of cities, through initiatives that also incorporate the principles of sustainability introducing innovative ways of governance and healthy lifestyles. Following initiatives of city networks at national (“Sustainable Food Cities Network” in the UK, “Eating City” in France) or international (“Creative cities of Unesco”), the “Gastronomic Cities” network was funded by the Urbact programme of the EU in the period 2013-15, consisting five European cities that cooperate in order to exchange practices and promote themselves optimally using gastronomy as a key urban development (Cavicchi & Ciampi Stancova, 2016).

A new policy approach for regional development has been smart specialization that is based on national/ regional strengths, expertise and knowledge and aims towards the diversification and specialization of regional economies (Charles & Ciampi Stankova, 2015). Following the Communication ‘Regional Policy contributing to smart growth in Europe 2020’ , the Smart Specialisation Platform (S3P) was established in 2011 in order to assist EU national and regional policy makers to form and materialize their Research and Innovation strategies for smart specialization (RIS3) and eventually receive funding from the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) (European Comission, 2017). According to the database that has been formed with the priorities of EU countries and regions, those that are agro-food related are among the most prominent, while out of them, the second largest proportion, i.e. 20% of all agro-food related priorities, regards ‘agro-food and tourism’ that is further described as: sustainable tourism, eco-tourism, experience-based industry, and health and wellness tourism (Cavicchi & Ciampi Stancova, 2016).

In this context, a series of consultations of the South Aegean Region with business and community stakeholders, academia and the Hellenic Centre for Marine Research, culminated in a list of main priorities with emphasis given on the tourism and agro-food sectors. According to the Region’s report, central to the development strategy is innovation in experience tourism, that is interpreted as “sustainable economic upgrading of tourism and related sectors through reorientation of businesses towards more profitable activities and markets, with greater skill and technological intensity and developed in harmony with the cultural and natural environments” (IMA of South Aegean, 2015). This aims at four axes

that include expansion of the value chain (interconnections of tourism with agriculture and culture), differentiation of the tourism product (from mass tourism to other forms, including gastronomic), improvement of hospitality services and infrastructure (certification schemes), and IT and clean energy technology investments. The promotion of the Aegean Cuisine initiative is mentioned as cornerstone action for developing experience tourism (ibid.). It is presented in the following sub-chapter.

As regards promotion of the gastronomic offer at national level in Greece it is largely vague and fragmented and as the Greek Tourism Confederation (SETE) stresses, there is absence of an independent gastronomy portfolio along with established ones (e.g. health tourism, city break, conferences, countryside, sea, etc). Mentioning examples of Cretan, Santorini and Aegean regional cuisines, SETE (2009) supports that as Greece is yet not a mature gastronomic destination, the Greek Tourism authorities should first focus on branding and establishing the Greek cuisine as a whole and afterwards, under its umbrella to include regional cuisines and their brands.

2.5.2 The Aegean Cuisine (AC) initiative

The Aegean Cuisine initiative was inaugurated in 2008 by the Center for Business and Technological Development (KETA) of the South Aegean in cooperation with the Cyclades and Dodecanese chambers of commerce. It is a network that forms through the selective incorporation of businesses (currently 196 in 28 islands), such as restaurants, food producers, food and wine retail. Funding for the initiative's establishment and development was secured from the Operation "Promotion of the tourist product of the South Aegean Region" of the ERDF 2007-2013 that was directed to the South Aegean Region. Not irrelevantly, central motive of its creation according to one of its founders was the acknowledgement that:

The development of tourism in the islands depends on the enrichment of the tourist product with a change in direction from mass to thematic, a turn

towards special interest tourism and the prolongation of the tourist season
(Kalostos, 2014)

As such, according to the Chamber of Cyclades (6/5/2014) the Aegean Cuisine's goals are:

- The creation of destinations of gastronomic interest in accordance with the productive and cultural wealth of the islands so as to enrich the tourist product and to broaden the tourist market
- The increase of revenues for the businesses-members
- The promotion of the local produce and the encouragement towards exporting it
- The preservation of the unique wealth of traditional recipes and products
- The promotion of historical and folkloric elements that are related to food, wine and drinks as well as customs and traditional ways of food production and preparation
- The establishment of the Aegean as a single gastronomic destination

In the first stage of the initiative a series of informational events and consultations with a variety of actors in the gastronomy business such as restaurateurs, hoteliers, winemakers, producers and vendors of food and drink products that culminated in publication of the *Aegean Cuisine* book, the first effort of its kind to record, register and present what the particular regional cuisine consists of. The book, along with the Aegean Cuisine portal, are the points of reference of what the scheme stands for. The latter is also the main marketing tool, as it provides up-to-date directories of local businesses- members with suggestions to visitors about where to eat, winery tours, stores selling local products, cooking classes and wine-tasting workshops.

The gastronomic quality standards are set by a *Special Advisory Commission on Gastronomy* that consists of prominent members of the food and wine industry, namely chefs, food and wine writers, oenologists as well as academics. The Commission holds an advisory and supporting role in the assessment and admission of businesses as well as for existing members. At this point members are largely restaurants, since

...the threshold of the Aegean Cuisine initiative are dining establishments and any business where the visitor is in direct contact with the flavors, dishes, food

products and wines of the Aegean. Priority was given to these businesses in belief that they act as ambassadors of local gastronomic traditions... (Aegean Cuisine, 2016)

In more recent years TÜV Hellas (TÜV Nord) has been the private independent authority that has been assigned to set the standards and conduct the assessment according to which restaurants may become members or not. The criteria are classified in general and specific ones. The general criteria regard standards of cleanliness and hygiene of spaces (kitchen, apparatus, storerooms, etc) and personnel so as to secure food safety. The specific criteria regard a set minimum of appetizers, main dishes and desserts in the restaurant's menu that are made from AC recipes and ingredients. In addition, the AC menu entries have to be distinctively presented and explained. The raw materials and ingredients (fruits and vegetables, meat, fish, olive oil, potatoes) should be preferably fresh and along with wines and drinks should come from local producers (in priority from the same island, then the Aegean Islands in general and when not possible from around Greece). Last but not least, restaurant decoration and aesthetics, as well as dish presentation should bear the distinct elements of the Aegean islands' tradition and culture (Chamber of Cyclades, 2014). Businesses that fulfill the criteria are then awarded the certification and can bear the AC logo.

The AC organizers assure (Aegean Cuisine portal, 2017) that network membership provides a variety of promotional and commercial benefits. These, apart from the presentation at the AC portal itself, include exposure to domestic and international tourist fairs, inclusion in food websites and guides, brochures, press releases that are distributed to tourism professionals, food writers and individuals. Members also benefit from access to seminars and workshops as well as from practical and technical assistance by specialized advisors. The AC was also the vehicle through which the South Aegean Region organized the successful bid for the "European Region of Gastronomy 2019". This award provides the opportunity to further establish the region as a gastronomic destination.

The AC initiative plans to further expand its network so as to encompass the Northern Aegean islands as well (in cooperation with the four respective chambers of commerce) but also to restaurants in Athens, the rest of Greece, and abroad (ibid.).

2.6 Concluding remarks for the research perspective

Reflecting on the reviewed studies on gastronomic tourism a recurring observation that draws attention is the correlation between certain characteristics of a destination's food offer and the impacts they may have. Distinctiveness, loyalty to traditional practices and ingredients, connection with the locality as regards procurement and community are part of an identity that along with optimal delivery to tourists appear to be traits that create mental associations, of either attachment (Tsai, 2016), memorability (Quan and Wang, 2004), or even an overall sustainable approach adoption (Sims, 2009). Such traits, along with their effective communication and promotion (Capatti, 2012; Fox, 2007; Okumus et al., 2013) in turn construct a positive destination image that is reflected on increased visit intentions and tourist quality attributes such as the attraction of more food-oriented tourists, decreased seasonality and increased spending (Everett and Aitchison, 2008). The local factor as regards its peculiarities plays a significant role on many levels, from the distinctiveness of the food offer to, as Bartella (2011) and Cavicchi & Ciampi Stancova (2016) stress, the development of a food tourism policy since every place is unique and interacts differently. Another view that seems to be shared by a number of researchers (Montanari & Staniscia, 2009; Sanchez-Cañizares and Castillo-Canalejo, 2015; Everett & Slocum, 2013; Ottenbacher & Harrington, 2013; Horng & Tsai, 2012) is that cooperation among different stakeholders is vital when it comes to gastronomic tourism policies planning and implementation. Again, the local factor is an important one in the sense that Montanari and Stanicia (2009) underline, that refers to cooperation of the *terroir* stakeholders, which regard procurement, delivery but also the community. A gap that is therefore identified from the literature is that of a *combination* of the above mentioned

themes. As such within this combined theoretical framework, perspectives of local restaurateurs that conveniently encompass awareness from production to consumption will be used to investigate matters of connection between the gastronomic offer, tourism, the local community and stakeholders, promotion and the effect of AC on these from a case in *Greece*. Under this prism conclusions will expose problems and provide insights for the development of gastronomic tourism. As such this research will add up to the limited scope of this relatively understudied area, especially in Greece.

Chapter 3. Research Methodology and Design

3.1 Research philosophy and approach

Viewing social phenomena as the products of interaction and reflection of the social actors, as opposed to an independent, self-sown existence, constitutes a *constructivist* approach (Matthews and Ross, 2010). This ontological view is deemed as most appropriate for this research: the development of gastronomic tourism requires the activation of a system of stakeholders and its establishment is the result of their relationships and cooperation. Furthermore, not only restaurateurs are a crucial link between various actors in tourism, but also the main policy recipients who also have their own subjective views, that as Matthews and Ross (2010) note, are subject to constant review and adjustment. Independence of social actors, refers to the level of the researcher's involvement as well, who however inevitably brings own meanings and understandings (ibid.). Perspective on the fulfillment of potential in gastronomic tourism is by definition a subjective one. Interconnectivity of the social actors in tourism case therefore calls for the constructivist approach.

After deciding over the way of viewing social phenomena we may then decide about the type of knowledge to obtain in order to study them. Not irrelevant to the constructivist ontological approach adopted, *interpretivism* is the epistemological position that "prioritizes people's subjective interpretations and understandings of social phenomena and their own actions" (Matthews and Ross, 2010; p.28). The reflection of involved actors, namely restaurateurs as regards problems towards attracting gastronomy-interested visitors is of course generated subjectively. *Their* view and interaction also is important as to make conclusions about an adopted policy (as in the case of the AC initiative) that is built upon a systematization of their services. In order to enrich our knowledge about this, qualitative data, rich in detail and description is necessary, as is engagement with subjective meanings, both features of the interpretivist approach.

The interpretivist approach, along with the already mentioned fact that research on food tourism has started to develop only recently, but also taking into account the *exploratory* nature of this dissertation that a limited scope deters it from being fully explanatory (Yin, 1994 cited by Everett and Aitchison, 2008), predispose for an *inductive* overall theoretical approach. The general pattern in this approach is to start with research questions, possibly informed by existing theory and then make assumptions –the tentative theory- (Matthews and Ross, 2010). The lack of a solid basis of “definitions, laws, formal logic, or mathematical expressions” forming the premises of a theoretical background means that conclusions bear a greater degree of uncertainty (Gomez and Jones III, 2010; p. 71). This is because even though patterns that are identified predispose for future actions, nevertheless there is no guarantee that next observations will be consistent (ibid.).

These directions call for an overall qualitative research strategy. A qualitative data collection and analysis procedure uses and generates non-numerical data, predominantly words (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2007). Furthermore, it is the centrality of restaurateurs’ perceptions in this research that constitutes the qualitative paradigm as the natural choice. As Bryman (1988), underlines:

The most fundamental characteristic of qualitative research is its express commitment to viewing events, action, norms, values, etc. from the perspective of the people who are being studied. (...) The strategy of taking the subject’s perspective is often expressed in terms of seeing through the eyes of the people you are studying. (p. 61).

At this point, another philosophical underpinning that is revealed is that of axiology. Heron (1996, cited in Saunders et al., 2007) stresses the importance of individual values in all human action and consequently the conduct of research in other words from the choice of topic to choices of data collection techniques. In this case, consideration of alternatives for tourism development, such as via the gastronomic potential, involving particular stakeholders, i.e. restaurateurs, in order to provide their perspective, also have an axiological causation as has the choice of personal interaction with them via interviews as is demonstrated in the following sections.

3.2 Research Strategy and Design

As Saunders et al. (2007) mention, the notion that different research strategies may belong to either the deductive or inductive approaches although relevant can be also oversimplistic and what is more important is whether which one is more likely to enable the researcher to find answers in research questions and meet the research aim. Choice of research strategy is also result of the availability of existing knowledge and the researcher's philosophical underpinnings (Saunders et al., 2007), as the already mentioned axiological. Without being mutually exclusive, possible research strategies include experiment, survey, action research, grounded theory, ethnography, archival research and the case study (ibid.), the strategy of choice of this dissertation. As Ragin (1994, cited by Flick, 2007; p:36) stresses, a research design refers to "a plan for collecting and analyzing evidence that will make it possible for the investigator to answer whatever questions he or she has posed". Flick (2007) notes that the case study is one of the basic designs for a qualitative research, a choice that is then linked with design issues including sampling, the intended generalization and quality issues (i.e. in the conduct of interviews).

Denscombe (2007) underlines that "the defining characteristic of the case study approach is its focus on just one instance of the thing that is to be investigated" (p. 35). Various advantages are noted regarding the use of the case study approach, including: the ability to study things in detail contrary to a survey approach that entails a large number of instances (more superficial engagement), the focus it provides on relationships and processes that eventually generates a more holistic approach, the natural setting in which it is conducted as opposed to an artificially created one and finally the convenience it provides the researcher to use a variety of sources, types of data and research methods (Denscombe, 2007). Considerable caution is however required when the case study approach is preferred with its weak point being the fact that its findings refer to a small number of instances and furthermore generalizations are of limited range since they are based on particular cases (Ragin, 1989). Other weaknesses that should be considered are the "lack of rigour" in the sense that tends to focus on processes instead of measurable findings, the difficulty to define the boundaries of the case as opposed to a strictly defined

one out of the real world, the limited or no access when ethical matters interfere and also the “observer effect” that is a component that may cause differentiations in the responses of those being observed (Denscombe, 2007). Despite these parameters that were taken into account during the conduct of the research, the case study approach was appropriate for fulfilling the research aim. The restaurateurs’ perspectives as regards issues that contribute to gastronomic tourism development encompass a holistic understanding of the local community and the dynamics within it. Verschuren (2003) notes that what distinguishes the case study approach from other methods and research strategies is that from the very beginning it takes for granted the interaction among social characteristics within the case and this is not something that is been discovered later on, during the data processing. This allows the researcher to have a round perspective of the research subject and not to construct a fragmented social reality that needs induction in order to be analyzed. In addition, the case study is capable to encompass qualities of the wider system, that while not strictly within the case’s subject, are nevertheless highly influential (Verschuren, 2003). In addition, and particularly for the current research project Hjalager & Richards (2002, cited in Everett & Aitchison, 2008:154) point out: “work on food tourism has acknowledged the case study to be an effective research strategy, providing a vital link between theory and practice”.

As mentioned earlier, the Cyclades islands are one of the top tourist destinations in Greece. Despite its popularity the island region also demonstrates some of the main problems of Greek tourism, i.e. high seasonality, development of tourism at the expense of other sectors (notably agriculture) and tourist quality characteristics that deteriorate the sector’s economic benefits in the long term. On the other hand, the potential for the development of dormant assets, such as the local cuisine and its proper connection with the tourism product is underlined, as the inauguration of AC initiative demonstrates. From the fragmented region, Naxos island has been selected as the case study for this dissertation for a combination of reasons. Firstly, and as will be more thoroughly presented in chapter 4.1, amongst Cyclades islands Naxos’ terrain and traditions provide a very strong basis, in other words potential for the development of gastronomic tourism and as such it is very interesting to investigate reasons that possibly hinder its fulfillment. Secondly, Naxos does

not constitute an 'extreme' case of Cycladic island: globally known and connected nearby Mykonos and Santorini, with strong and well-defined brand names on the one hand and small islands with very few inhabitants and tourist inflows on the other are such cases. Generalization (that here refers to the South Aegean Region) from a case study is something that requires caution, so in order to be as legitimate as possible it should come from a rather typical case. Denscombe (2007) noted that if a case is similar in crucial respects with others then the findings of the research are more likely to apply elsewhere. By working on the case of Naxos, conclusions could rather apply –*mutatis mutandis*– to a larger portion of the particular region, or other regions.

Taking into account that AC membership is an action that indicates acknowledgement of the need for advancing a restaurant's appeal among gastronomic tourists, Naxos provides a case where the restaurant members are 15, that is comparably numerous in the absolute and proportional sense. The spatial concentration of the main tourist settlements into three main geographical units (*Hora*, the island's main settlement; *the beach* that is constituted of the adjacent resorts of Ag. Prokopios, Agia Anna and Plaka and *the mountain* villages of Apiranthos and Koronos) meant that restaurants were also in relative proximity compared to other islands, thus increasing convenience (see Figure 1). Combining these traits, Naxos was also the closest island to the researcher's base (Athens), a notable advantage because of the limited time and financial resources. As such, convenience is another factor that advocates for the choice of the particular case: "it is reasonable for the researcher to select the one(s) which involves the least travel, the least expense and the least difficulty when it comes to gaining access" (Denscombe, 2007:41).

Location	Interviewee	Type of Business	Relationship to Business	AC member	Operation	Est.
Hora	Int. 1	Restaurant	Owner	Yes	April-October	2007
Hora	Int. 2	Breakfast/ Brunch	Owner	Yes	May-October	2010
Hora	Int. 3	Tavern	Owner-Family	Yes	Year round	1970
Hora	Int. 4	Café/ Restaurant	Owner	Yes	April-October	1995
Hora	Int. 5	Restaurant	Owner	No	April-October	1970
Hora	Int. 6	Restaurant	Owner-Family	No	Year round	1991
Hora	Int. 7	Restaurant	Owner-Family	No	April-October	1996
Beach	Int. 8	Tavern	Owner	Yes	May-October	2004
Beach	Int. 9	Café/ Restaurant	Owner	No	June-October	2001
Beach	Int. 10	Tavern	Owner	No	June-October	1998
Beach	Int. 11	Café/ Restaurant	Owner	Yes	May-October	1987
Beach	Int. 12	Hotel/ Restaurant	Chef	Yes	May-October	2006
Beach	Int. 13	Tavern	Owner	Yes	May-October	1994
Mountain village	Int. 14	Tavern	Owner	Yes	May-October	1982
Mountain village	Int. 15	Tavern	Owner	Yes	June-October	1994
Mountain village	Int. 16	Tavern	Owner	Yes	April-October	2007

Table 1: Interviewees' profile

3.3 Research Methods

3.3.1 Collection of data

Participants

As it has already been mentioned, restaurant owners constitute a link between local producers and tourists and as they communicate with both they provide a good insight of local conditions and issues (Everett & Aitchison, 2008). Since AC membership regards food establishments which are oriented towards clientele that the gastronomic aspect matters more on their vacation, the intention was to include all 15 members. Nevertheless it was deemed important to also include food establishments with such orientation and that share similar characteristics, although not AC members. A registry of all the food establishments in the island is provided by the internet site of the Chamber of Cyclades (2017).

The field research took place in June 2017. From the fifteen AC network members in Naxos, interviews were conducted with the owners of eleven of them who agreed to participate after a telephone contact which explained the outline and purpose of the research. One restaurateur cancelled the initial interview due to personal reasons and a second appointment wasn't feasible to be arranged at a convenient time for both the researcher and the interviewee. Two establishments were still not open at the time of the field research while only one restaurateur did not wish to participate.

From non-members, in the three locations where the AC members were located (namely Hora, beach and mountain) there were totally 31 food establishments. A sample of nine restaurants was sourced that matched sampling criteria that were formed in order to exclude food establishments that were less likely to aim at gastronomy tourism for local cuisine. As such there were excluded establishments with specific character and menu offerings (e.g. pizzerias, souvlaki grills, fried chicken, Mexican). Apart from that, other criteria was some commitment demonstrated to local food and cuisine, showcased on the description in the registry or at the establishment itself. Food establishments that operated for less than 3 years were also excluded as a larger period of time is important for the establishment in the market but also for the restaurateurs to have a more clear image of

the situation in the island. Visiting the three areas where the restaurants were located (see Figure 1) was helpful in order to witness the establishment's character in cases this was not clear from the registry's description. Out of the nine professionals five agreed to participate after being contacted either via telephone or in situ and were informed as in the case of AC members. All participants are presented in Table 1.

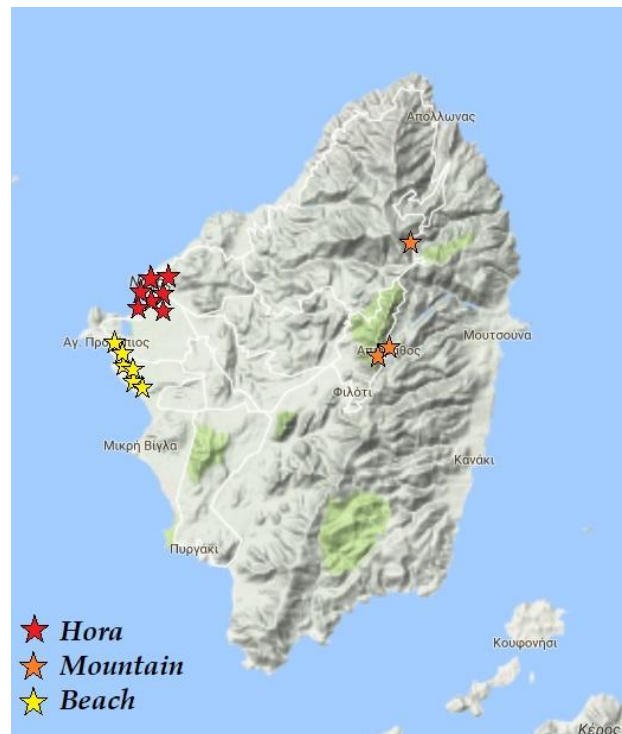


Figure 1: Locations of interviewees **Source:** maps.google.com, Own elaboration

Interviews. Method and Process

In order to achieve a good response rate, face-to-face interviews are far more efficient despite the fact that they require more time than other methods (e.g. questionnaires) (Gillham, 2000). Among different types of interviews, for the particular research, the semi-structured interview was deemed more appropriate. In this type of interview, an operationalization of research questions exists which nevertheless retain an open-ended and flexible nature in a way that it's easier for the interviewees to “define the

situation on the basis of their own experience and so to focus on what they consider relevant” (Alexiadou, 2001: 52). The interviewer can seek clarification and elaboration on given answers and enter into a dialogue with the interviewees, something that could not be achieved with a more standardized interview while on the other hand it still provides a greater structure for comparability in relation with the focused or unstructured interview (May, 2011). Flick (2007) notes that one of the stepping stones of realizing a qualitative research design is participants’ involvement so as not to feel neglected in case something that they consider important is however not covered by the researcher’s questions in the interview guide. As such, the researcher is necessary to be open enough about additional information beyond that aimed through the questions, in other words to be flexible in their interaction with the respondents (Flick, 2007) and this is an ability provided by the semi-structured interview. Notably, this is also strongly connected with the interpretivist epistemological approach that is being followed.

Careful preparation of the interviews is required however in order to keep them reasonably brief and to secure a good interaction with the interviewees. Denscombe (2007) notes that the similarity between the interview and a conversation is misleading and may induce to the researcher a more “relaxed attitude to the planning, preparation and conduct” of the interviews (p. 174). Other issue that was considered in order not to undermine the interview process is the “interviewer effect” regarding self- presentation and personal involvement: while guiding the interviewees towards issues that he/she wants to extract information about, the interviewer will also be neutral and non-committal and encourage them to open up (ibid.).

The semi-structured interviews were based on an interview guide that can be found in Appendix 1. Its structure was a reflection of the research aim and questions and the main parameters extracted by the literature. As such, questions 1 to 5 regarded information about the operation of the eating establishments and AC membership and due to the focus on their local interaction a question about owner’s locality. All interviewees were found to be from Naxos except for one. Questions 6 and 7 regarded the issue of linkage between the gastronomic offer and different aspects of locality. Question 8 discussed restaurateurs’ perspectives on the promotion of the gastronomic offer of the island. Questions 9 and 10

were about the issue of cooperation among different stakeholders. Questions 11 and 12 were posed in order to juxtapose the above issues with AC membership while the last ones aimed to expose any other issues that the interviewees might need to express. The interview guide for non AC members was similar with the difference that questions regarding AC aimed towards knowledge about the network and evaluation of a possible membership.

All interviews were conducted face-to-face at the participant's respective business after the appointments were arranged and lasted from 25 to 40 minutes while Greek was used being the native language of all interviewees as well as of the interviewer. At the beginning of the process the research outline and purpose was briefly explained along with the ethical considerations. Since "memory is rather unreliable as a research instrument" and "prone to partial recall, bias and error" (Denscombe, 2007:195) and in order to have "a permanent record and one that is fairly complete in terms of the speech that occurs" an audio recording is appropriate (ibid.: 196). In order to proceed with recording the interviews permission was asked and was explained that the recordings were only for the researcher's use. Out of the sixteen participants, four declined to proceed with recording (one AC member and 3 non AC members) and consequently in these cases field notes were kept instead.

As is with the nature of the semi-structured interview, during the process there was significant flexibility as regards the ordering of questions (in each case the flow of speech made a different ordering of the issues more natural) and more focus on particular issues that certain interviewees deemed more important (for instance a differentiation seemed to exist with interviewees in the mountain villages as regards their connection with the rest of island, a reflection that exposed issues of cooperation with other stakeholders). There were also cases where other questions emerged. All the recordings were later transcribed with the help of an online application (oTranscribe) in Greek.

3.3.2 Data Analysis

The amount and nature of the data obtained through transcriptions and field notes is such that in order to proceed to analysis the researcher needs to make it more discernible and more organized. Denscombe (2007) stresses that from data collection to final analysis the process is one of constant revision, not in the sense that something was wrong but because interpretation is changeable and dynamic and this in turn affects the coding and thematic arrangement of the data. A necessary first step that was followed during the process was the development of familiarity with the data, through “reading and re-reading text data” so as to “getting a feel for the data and becoming immersed in the minute details of what was said” (ibid.: 290).

After developing familiarity, coding was applied on the text data to the point that they could be roughly grouped so as to form the main themes and concepts. As already mentioned, an iterative process meant that codes, the links between them and ultimately themes, were revised in order to ultimately clearly reflect the research questions and hence the main concepts that were extracted from the literature review and that provides the framework that is being followed for what is important for gastronomic tourism. As such, there were identified four main thematic categories: Attitudes and respective practices towards linking the gastronomic offer with the locality, cooperation among stakeholders, promotion actions of the gastronomic offer and the AC factor. These are also the themes upon which the following chapter is constructed.

3.4 Ethical considerations

The interview participants of this research do not belong in a vulnerable group of people and the topics that were discussed do not constitute sensitive ones. Nevertheless the participants were provided with the assurance that their fully voluntary involvement would not pose any harm to them or to their businesses. Of course, no participant should be worse off at the end of the research compared to when it started (Denscombe, 2007).

Not only this assurance is an ethical prerequisite, it is also necessary to put participants at ease and their input to be as candid as possible. The engagement in a competitive business is a fact that probably makes restaurateurs wary of their participation in the research. Confidentiality of information is of prime importance for the conduct of any legitimate social research, while research data should be kept secure and personal identities of interviewees remain protected (ibid.). As already mentioned in the interview process, all participants were fully informed about the research being part of a master's dissertation, the research aim, how it would be used and consent was asked for recording the interviews. The participants were also informed that if they wish they could stop the interview after it started or withdraw their input at any given point. Flick (2007) notes that analyzing interview data, the interviewer takes care of anonymity issues in such a way that participants cannot be identified in or through the research. There were participants which declared that they wouldn't mind if their contributions were anonymous or not, nevertheless in this dissertation all have been assigned code names.

Chapter 4. Case Study Naxos. Introduction to the study area, Research results and Analysis.

This chapter is divided in the first part that provides a brief analysis and acquaintance with the research area and the second part that contain the research findings and analysis

4.1 Introduction to the study area

General characteristics of the Cyclades and Naxos

The Cyclades form a historic as well as a regional unit of the South Aegean Region that consists of 56 islands, 24 of which are inhabited. It is home to one of Europe's earliest cultures, the Cycladic (3200-1000 BC) and archaeological remains of the Minoan and Classical Greek periods are found, most notable of which is Delos, an UNESCO inscribed world heritage site. With their particular natural attributes, architecture and culture the Cyclades have evolved into one of Greece's main touristic regions, nonetheless with various degrees of tourism development: the lion-share of infrastructures and tourist arrivals is attributed to the islands of Santorini, Mykonos and Paros.

Situated in the very center of the Aegean Sea (see Figure 2), Naxos is the largest of the Cyclades complex, with 428 sq. km. A mountainous island, its main geomorphological features are a central mountain chain with North-South direction (Za peak is the highest point in the Cyclades, at 1004 m) and a lowland area in the west that occupies 30% of the island. The latter sustains much of Naxos' agriculture while extensive terrace farming is practiced in the more rugged terrain at the center of the island a common practice in much of the rocky and arid Cycladic islands. Its coastline is characterized by the limited natural harbors that combined with the extensive –for the standards of the small Cyclades islands- hinterland, explain the development of agriculture and stock raising, as opposed to fishing (ETAP, 2008). The natural and cultural landscape of Naxos is characterized by great variations, from the most extensive sandy beaches of the Cyclades, to forested or rocky inland, traditional villages and agricultural practices as well as archaeological sites, all of which form a solid basis for tourism development.

Roughly 15% of the population of Cyclades resides in Naxos, i.e. 18.340 out of 124.106 in 2011 (Greek statistics). More than half of the island's population is concentrated in the capital, Hora (Naxos) in the west coast and the trend is that of increase at the expense of the mountain villages.

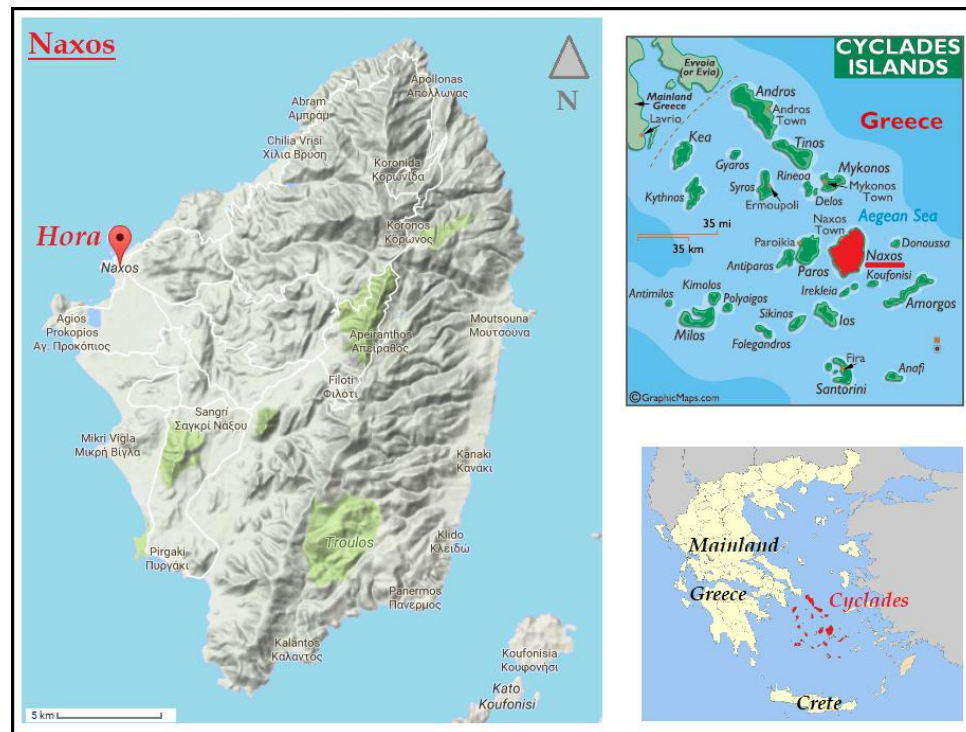


Figure 2: Naxos and Cyclades **Sources:** maps.google.com, graphicmaps.com, Wikimedia commons, Own elaboration

Historical account

Naxos has been continuously inhabited since the 4th millennium BC and has been an important center of the Early Bronze Age Cycladic culture. In antiquity, Naxos was famous for the emery exports and its high quality marble, that has been used extensively in works of art spanning many different periods of Greek history. Along with its substantial agricultural production these have been attributes to inspire Pindar to commend Naxos as “rich” and Herodotus as “surpassing the other isles in prosperity”.

Since the Middle Ages, the island has been at the epicenter of the antagonism between Christian and Islamic powers of the time. Contrary to much of the rest of Greece that was largely under Ottoman control, Naxos and nearby islands formed dependencies of either Genoa or Venice, while a shorter period of Ottoman rule was limited to tax collection thus keeping cultural influences at a minimal level. As such, cultural attributes and practices of agriculture and gastronomy predominantly reflected those of western powers. In the 16th century the Cyclades were the only part of Greece with dairy cows, as the Venetians introduced the tradition of cow milk cheeses. Agriculture and mining continued to be the mainstays of Naxian economy after Greek Independence in the 19th century, while tourism started to develop only after 1980, much later than Cyclades' main destinations.

Economic profile

Almost 20% of Naxos' workforce is employed in the Primary sector, contrary to 11,3% in the rest of the Cyclades reflecting the significant agricultural production. On the other hand less workforce is occupied proportionately in the Secondary (21% versus 26%) and the Tertiary sectors (49% vs 53,7% in the Cyclades) (ETAP, 2008).

The Primary sector of the economy has traditionally been important for Naxos. As regards mining the high quality marble of Naxos continues to contribute revenues, contrary to emery that is regarded obsolete. Potato and potato seeds, along with horticulture and fruits (mainly citrus) are important crops in the western lowland, while agriculture in the mountainous area is centered on viticulture and olive trees for oil. Cow rearing is widespread in the plain and sheep and goats are bred in the inner mountains. The approximately 10.000 cows and 100.000 free-ranging sheep and goats produce 1.500 tonnes of cheese annually, for which Naxos is most known for. The most famous Naxian cheese, granted PDO (Protected Designation of Origin) is *Graviera Naxou*, made with cow's and sheep's and goat's milk (proportion 80%-20%). Other important cheeses include *Arseniko*, *Xynomyzithra*, *Xynotyro*, *Ladotyro* (stored in olive oil), all of which are made of sheep-goat milk. The island is sufficient and exports meat (out of 1.000 tonnes of annual production), except for the import of pork meat in the summer months of high demand (Greek Gastronomy Guide, 2017).

Food procession is thus an important activity of the Secondary sector and much of its workforce, is employed in creameries, dairy farms, citrus breweries (for another exporting product the “Citron liqueur”), potato packaging plants, olive oil mills, wineries (for bulk wine), confectioneries (marmalades) (Dafni, 2006).

The Tertiary sector of Naxos’ economy is dominated by tourism that is accompanied by supporting services including transports and banking. A 30% of the island’s workforce is occupied in the sector, while a large proportion of wholesale and retail trade is dependent on it. Tourism development in the islands is unbalanced in many aspects. Half of tourist arrivals occur in the summer months of July and August and the rest in the period between late April and October, thus forming a highly seasonal tourism profile (ETAP, 2008). The majority of tourists originate in countries from other European countries while a quarter is domestic. Development of infrastructures related to the sector has been unplanned and is highly concentrated in Hora and the western coast, with impacts on the landscape and at the expense of pre-existing activities, mainly of the Primary sector. This trend has contributed in the deterioration of the above mentioned vital sectors of the Naxian economy that is also reflected in the abandoning of the island’s interior, especially by younger people (Dafni, 2006).

4.2 Research findings and Analysis

This section is arranged in sub-chapters that each correspond to the research sub-questions.

4.2.1 Attitudes and respective practices towards linking the gastronomic offer with the locality

Something that was more or less found common in the responses of the participants was that they were keen to underline that connecting their operation with local production and cuisine was a conscious and central choice that not only enabled them to secure a clientele with favorable characteristics, (among others loyalty, higher expenditure, knowledge and interest on experimenting with local tastes) but also a sense of personal fulfillment and pride. In many cases they were keen on describing how they choose to differentiate themselves and how they are rewarded on multiple levels. According to one of them:

“Actually there is no need for more money to do all this. It requires love and commitment, as older generations used to do... you have a better harvest [metaphorically]... and you see this in the long term, this is a profit, that you are also much healthier. First and foremost you feel proud... you took from your own basket and you shared it with another human across the table. This has a different taste... “I haven’t tasted such a zucchini before” they will tell you. And both you and the visitor are content. Because the visitor should leave here with the best impressions...and this has to be on a solid basis, not superficially. The visitor has to be your own people the moment they enter your place. This is where all begins... And then they will advertise you by themselves... and more will come. A disappointed customer takes away another 11, while a content one brings 4 more, as a principle of commerce says (...)” (Int. 2)

Another one stressed how important was through his business to protect and promote Naxos’ identity:

“Naxos is a blessed island because we have primary sector. We have cheese, milk, meat, fruits, potatoes –which in previous years they molested it so to grow more but fortunately this has stopped-, the soil here supports a high quality of products. I strive here, I also own a field where I grow a few of my ingredients. It’s very tiresome but these are the tastes I want to promote. These tastes that we have here in Cyclades are in no other place abroad. And the tourist that comes here, is not coming for the pizza of Italy or the American hamburger, they come to savor something local. Even something very simple, they may love it because it’s unique, we provided it with care. This is our tradition” (Int. 1)

There were instances where participants highlighted that apart from effort it requires innovation and appropriate focus in order to be able to incorporate the local parameter substantially as many times “it is much easier to see what a big portion of the market demands and you just provide it” (Tria Adelfia), however:

“When we have an overall cost that is considerably lower [using international products] and another that is [based on local production] that is more expensive in my opinion eventually the cheap one will not have the advantage. I want to say that it is us who form the tourist product, because it is not acceptable to have the Apirathitiko [a meat product] that is similar but distinct from bacon and despite that to serve bacon from abroad. So, I try to incorporate that instead in my dishes and accompanied with explanation and presentation it is something that it is valued and in the majority of cases preferred” (Int. 8)

“Many [professionals] want to open a large restaurant that includes all of Europe inside [cuisine, ingredients], and there you don’t know what you eat, you are lost, confused in a huge menu, for two or three years you make a profit and in the fourth year circumstances force you to close. On the other hand, by working on a focused, well-prepared small range of quality, local

dishes you then gain reputation gradually and you have a long term profit, not just a couple of years before a closure you can't avoid" (Int. 11)

As regards this focus a restaurateur mentioned that it is important in order to get away from a "mass and fast" mentality in tourism that is inevitably reflected on gastronomic habits as well. This however is not solely based on the part of the professionals, but rather on the interactivity with the customer:

"For us, in order to present to the customer what we aspire, we need time and calmness. This pressure that people may impose is not manageable. As such, the customer that comes here is explained that in order to provide them with something that is of high standards, inevitably we need time. For me it is fairer, as a professional to advice on dishes and their combinations... Sometimes we have customers that want to try everything in one dinner, we definitely respect that but when you have different categories of dishes and ingredients you can't savor the food (...) you should start from one point and aim to reach another with some pace (...) We aspire to be able to advice clients on food and drink pairing and then they will ask about the foods origins and making process and we will sit and explain. This is something we cherish" (Int. 6)

This remark, although coming from a higher-class restaurant and as such in certain aspects may be more representative of a certain scope, is rather linked with what Capatti (2012) underlines as essential for connecting tourists with the gastronomic offer and production basis of the place they visit, that is already discussed in the literature section: a knowledge that adapts them to the local culture so as to facilitate a more constructive interaction between the two parts. This dimension is also strongly linked with the issue of tourist promotion, another theme that is discussed in this chapter.

Most restaurateurs that participated said that they consider cases of very low-quality establishments to be rather rare so as to be able to affect the island's reputation and the eating enterprise sector in a bad way. Also they supported that in the last years there is a general trend that the 'local' factor is more valued and promoted at least fragmentary. On

the other hand according to the perspective of many there seems to prevail a “mentality of quick profit” (Int. 2, Int. 10, Int. 9, Int. 8, Int. 14, Int. 16) and an overrepresentation of generic, non-local food establishments or others that local food only covers a small portion in their menus (Int. 3, Int. 13, Int. 16, Int. 8). That, although gives themselves the opportunity to be more distinct, on the other hand deprives Naxos from “more good competition that then helps to improve the level in the whole island as a destination” (Int. 8).

Two participants (AC members) were very critical about a perceived misuse and in fact abuse of terms such as ‘local and traditional’. They noted that in many cases they are used as cover for other irregularities and as such are misleading. Such irregularities, according to them regard quality control and bad practices of the past.

“Because here in the island many pass the story of tradition while quality is of secondary importance. Gastronomy is like language, in order to be alive it needs to evolve. (...) I believe that the world is running fast, we can’t remain stagnant in the past. Many say that they have local cheese from Naxos. But where did they take it from? Was it a certified creamery? I could obtain Arseniko cheese from here, the mountain area, but if it has no certification, how can I have it in my restaurant? It’s also sanitary illegal. There is a deficit in quality controls. If controls were done properly a lot of things would be different.” (Int. 16)

“Sorry but having no menu catalogues is not traditional and like good old times, it’s just bad, unprofessional practice. There are taverns that are part of the touristic clique... you go there and sit and they don’t give you a menu, you don’t know what you order or how much you will pay... this is done orally.” (Int. 3)

These important issues were mentioned as having extensions in the other topics discussed in the following sub-chapters.

4.2.2 Cooperation among stakeholders

As regards the issue of cooperation of local and regional stakeholders in the support and development of gastronomic tourism in the island, restaurateurs' responses were predominantly directed towards infrastructures and coordination within the food and eating establishments' sector. Most participants stressed issues that affected not only them or gastronomic tourism specifically but tourism in the island in general in other words they posed indirect effects. The public sector, in particular central state and municipality were deemed as having great room for improving their support. Widely mentioned was the ongoing request of the local community as regards the insufficiency of the island's airport as alternative to ships for reaching the island but also for the main port's limited capabilities:

"Now that they decided to make the big airport in Paros [the nearest island] instead of here, we lost our chance." (Int. 1)

"The municipality puts pressure on the matter for decades now but certain interests mean all the money is directed to Mykonos and Santorini." (Int. 10)

"(...)that the port cannot host cruise ships... this is unacceptable" (Int. 14)

"For example...a few days ago we had a very large cruise ship, hundreds of tourists. They had to take smaller boats to reach the port. I mean... there is demand but it's like we don't want to do anything about it." (Int. 5)

At this point it should be noted that during the interviews there were cases where respondents referred to other Cycladic islands' (namely Paros, Mykonos, Santorini) touristic development as posing a challenge for the one in Naxos, in other words being competitive. Attributing a disproportional tourist development of some places to better promotion (a matter that will be discussed more thoroughly in the respective chapter) as opposed to Naxos' at least equal potential, a participant commented

“Santorini is sinking... they have tourism all year round. They reach the point to no accept more. On the other hand, our high season is only two months”
(Int. 3)

This remark could stem from a tourism planning in the island complex that instead of creating opportunities from a well supported combination of islands as a wider destination practicing island hopping, rather remains fragmented. Also, cooperation with competing and complementary destinations provides opportunities to learn from them (Buhalis, 2000). This issue however should be investigated more thoroughly in further research.

Apart from transportation for reaching the islands, participants also mentioned issues in the transportation infrastructure within the island. Restaurateurs from Hora (Int. 3, Int. 4, Int. 1, Int. 7) mentioned the detrimental effects of bad planning as regards traffic arrangements that exacerbated congestion and directing to routes that created an unfavorable image of the settlement that is traditional to a great extent.

“In the summer months congestion starts from the port and then spreads to all the main streets in the town. The port authority and the police try to deal with the problem by closing streets to traffic according to the occasion but this does not work. And the municipality? Nothing. They have to find a permanent solution” (Int. 3)

“When two ships come at the same time, it takes you half an hour to leave the port...unacceptable for a visitor to wait in the car, in the heat with their family...it feels like you are in Patission st. [avenue in Athens] with full traffic”
(Int. 4)

Complaints of restaurateurs from the mountain villages however not only regarded connection with Hora as a factor that according to them undermines tourist development but also a disparity that reflected conflicting interests. Interestingly a similar perception to the one that Naxos is competing with other Cycladic islands, was described by these

participants: in this case the two competing sides were the mountain villages on the one side and Hora and beach resorts in the lowland west on the other.

“Thanks to Manolis Glezos’ [prominent writer and politician born in the village] success to make the village a cultural settlement in the late 80s, tourism started to grow... However we are sabotaged, from the lowlanders. Either from the bus service that keeps schedules scarce, for the people that don’t rent car, either from the car rental business with the excuse that roads are not in good condition... from the businesses of Hora, Agia Anna, Agios Prokopios that ‘we don’t have good quality food in our village’, while it’s much superior...” (Int. 14)

“As municipal department we gave a fight and we managed to extend bus service to 11 pm from 15 July to the end of August. Still the previous one is at 7:30 pm, there isn’t one in between. This is arranged, believe me, so that people stay at Hora. But Naxos isn’t just one beach, there are 36 villages. It is these places that make the difference, people will come for the churches, the museums, the hospitality that they don’t have down at the beach” (Int. 15)

“Here it is more difficult. The tourist season has shrunk in the last years. In the lowland they have more people, more profit, so they don’t care” (Int. 16)

A good example of cooperation was mentioned by some respondents that regarded ‘Philoxenia’, Naxos’ Mass Catering Association. Actions of the Association were deemed as important steps that were supporting the gastronomic potential of the island:

“Through ‘Philoxenia’ we got the support of the municipality for the establishment of a gastronomic festival. Chefs will come, and with products of Naxos they will make recipes and this will be at the restaurants. This will be a summer event, promoted since winter... This year we didn’t manage to be ready on time, I believe in next year...” (Int. 1)

However it was mentioned that many in the sector are not supportive enough

“We need to support our association. Otherwise our voice cannot be heard. If you are idle, no one else will care for you. Of course there are also those that don’t want to cooperate. They prefer to work at the expense of others (...) The association tries to keep some quality standards for members” (Int. 3)

“There are some common actions but they are more like...for me it’s wrong... because they make cliques, it’s among friends... for example I could see some things, they don’t notify me, or the chefs in order to demonstrate. One is jealous for the other...competition.” (Int. 11)

Another participant mentioned that there was the issue of some hotels that despite not having a license, they offer breakfast and meals posing unfair competition (Int. 9). This perspective was related to the previously mentioned bad practices. As such, these practices are also translated as a deficit of cooperation between professionals of the same sector. The improvement of quality in the wider food sector was deemed as a matter of coordination between different stakeholders:

“But farmers also need information. They need training. For years now mayors make promises about the Agricultural Center but they can’t agree on the plot. I think it is a matter of priorities. But once it’s done it will be positive. We are agricultural island. It will be also good for us (...)” (Int. 16)

4.2.3 Promotion of the gastronomic offer

Participating restaurateurs’ views on the promotion of the gastronomic offer of the island were predominantly directed either towards the promotion campaigns per se, the other actions supportive to gastronomic tourism but also aspects of the gastronomic tourism profile. An improvement, in comparison with the past was mentioned by participants, yet significant gaps were also acknowledged:

“Gastronomy does play a role in Naxos’ tourism, I think it’s increased also because of that (...) In the last years there is good promotion by the

municipality and the Region in all expositions and in HORECA [largest annual tourism related exposition in the country]. In more recent years chefs from the island make presentations, last year we made the closing ceremony with local products, dances etc. This is very good to happen...We plan it also for Russia, everywhere..."(Int. 3)

"I like the fact that in the new tv spots they also start to present the gastronomy. Yet, I would like to see that more in exhibitions. To associate more the tasting with culture so for them to combine better and show our identity" (Int. 1)

Significant gaps were acknowledged as regards actions that could make the island's gastronomic appeal, stronger and more visible:

"It is very positive that South Aegean will be European Region of Gastronomy for 2019...but we are long way from becoming gastronomic destination. Gastronomy would be a way for extending the tourist season... If we manage to organize gastronomy events at the end of the tourist season, that is, September and October at the time of vine harvest or May and June we will be able to bring good customers in dead months... and these tourists are trained and want to see different things not stay in a cheap hotel and eat a sandwich" (Int. 2)

"The municipality and the Region do make significant efforts (...) We as Naxos, in order to acquire what we merit and to solidify our position the moment that we stand in the middle of two global tourism flagships, Mykonos and Santorini we need to do better branding of our products... They [Santorini] are in a very high gastronomic level using a lot of our products but we don't have as good advertising... a good management to make all this widely perceived"(Int. 6)

Respondents' knowledge and perspective about actions that enrich the gastronomic image of the island demonstrated that they were rather of sporadic character and organized

individually. It was however mentioned that there is will for enhancing these efforts and providing them with more support by local authorities:

“Naxos has to do something because it has agriculture and livestock farming so it can stand out gastronomically. I don’t see something to be happening though. (...) there isn’t a combining approach... I mean, beyond the Potato Festival, shouldn’t be there more?” (Int. 12)

“Such initiatives are in infancy...there are some cooking lessons from individuals in the last 2 or 3 years” (Int. 4)

“In 2017 we shouldn’t still discuss about sea, sun loungers and drinks... this is outdated. And fresh ideas are needed (...) this kind of tourist is not the one that helps us, not of high standards. We want tourists that want to unroll the skein of experience... food is an experience (...) it’s not only the taste, it’s all the senses that make it unique...it’s the place...to go and see how it’s made (...) We don’t have that.” (Int. 6)

Then the same restaurateur described their plan about an initiative for the following years:

“We want to organize small tours that will start from the mountain, to wind mills, see how the flour is made and then make traditional pies, then walks in the countryside, meeting with cheese makers we cooperate with, to savor and then we’ll show them how to do paring with wines... It’s a big plan but I need time” (Int. 6)

These responses demonstrate a certain keenness and effort to take advantage of opportunities through promoting the gastronomic assets of the island but also, and as participants stressed, a lack of support and coordination in order for them to grow and to be communicated. Others however, provided another insight that is related to the foundations and strategy about the gastronomic profile per se, and are also connected to the interpretations of ‘local and traditional’ that was mentioned earlier in this chapter.

“Generally they try to promote that Naxos is self- sufficient, but my personal opinion is that all this does not correspond to reality. For instance, I have seen some publications, yesterday an article at a newspaper of national circulation that Naxos is supposedly the ‘anti-Mykonos’... and it tried to convince that Naxos doesn’t need any evolution... that is, it’s gastronomic culture should be based on ‘yesterday’. I think there are certain interests that want to pass particular messages.” (Int. 16)

“(...) we have the largest island of the Cyclades... we are supposedly the island of Dionysus [god of wine making in Greek mythology]... and we don’t have a serious winery... While Santorini and Paros have good ones and here in every tavern you go they tell you they have their own wine. If you ask what variety is it? they can’t answer. Often it’s not of good quality. It’s bulk wine, questionable... We have to see what is happening around us. That is, gastronomy above all has to do with wine. When you can’t standardize your own wine, how can you go further? We want to have tourism with strong budget, if it’s to bring backpack tourism, it just doesn’t work. Especially with this taxation...maybe 10 years ago, not now.” (Int. 15)

These remarks also stress that the efficiency of marketing and promotion is largely dependent on the clarification of a destination’s strategy and aims. As Buhalis (2000) notes, marketing is not solely a tool for increasing incoming tourists but should rather function in favor of regional development objectives. Furthermore, a destinations’ promotion is an intricate task since tourists perceive all of their individual products and services as a whole that therefore means that individual product and service suppliers’ competitiveness is “interrelated and almost indistinguishable from one another” (Buhalis, 2000: p.99).

4.2.4 The Aegean Cuisine factor

Among the participating restaurateurs while most were AC members, some were not. In the first case, as explained in the Methodology section, membership in the AC network was evaluated as regards the above themes. On the other hand, non-members' participation considered their views as outsiders so as to speculate about the initiative's further dynamics. Along with the views of members from the inside, their input has been valuable.

Attitudes and practices towards linking the gastronomic offer with the locality

In relation to the first theme, i.e. connection with the locality, respondents' views were that before joining the AC network they were already oriented towards local cuisine and ingredients whereas after joining, this aspect was intensified for most of them. Amongst them, there were mentions of the AC factor giving them the incentive to be more creative and evolve their menus.

"I would say that before AC membership we had 50% local ingredients while afterwards about 95%" (Int. 13)

"We cooperated with local producers before but now instead of 100 kg of cheese we get a tone, 50 lambs are now 150, 10 boxes of tomatoes are now 25, 1 tone of potatoes is now 5...a big help for the local society. And this is very helpful for the local producers...we are at a point where the village's production is not enough as regards the cheese and we have to be supplied from other villages as well" (Int. 14)

"Before, we [eating establishment] did have a distinct island character [in the menu] but you know, when you join somewhere and you take more ideas, they provide you with books, you have a more specific direction, more consciousness" (Int. 8)

"The AC gives you room to be creative, they don't tell you to do exactly 'that'. To take the material, the local product from Naxos or the Aegean and to

make a recipe. For instance, I also make pizza...along with mortadello, I also add local cheese so the customer has this unique experience. This is the AC philosophy, the local product to be present in all recipes... Always certified of course!” (Int. 16)

Cooperation among stakeholders

While participants acknowledged that the AC was the incentive for them to come closer with local producers some suggestions reveal that there is great room for intensification of this relationship:

“It would be helpful if there was a list with some good, specialized producers that we could contact and then they could provide us with particular raw materials, for instance wild herbs... And we would support them. Two buckets of those herbs will cost me five days of labor, plus other ingredients I have to find myself, store them the whole winter which is additional cost...What we need is the whole network to come into contact with good specialized producers” (Int. 8)

Interestingly, from some participants it seemed that awareness regarding other AC members was limited and that facilitation of further cooperation and communication within the network seemed to lack:

“Just getting the AC certification is not enough, you have to keep trying. Many have it but I’m not sure if all of them are aware of its value” (Int. 2)

“Having the Graviera of Naxos, but using saganaki [non-Aegean type of cheese] with something inferior this is not noble competition. To me it costs more than double...They have the right, but outside AC...” (Int. 4)

“...the AC gives some awards, they advertised it on social media. Which were the criteria for these awards? No restaurant was informed, only some from within that are more in networking and have some acquaintances... there was an event, awards were given, we don’t know to whom...” (Int. 3)

Promotion of the gastronomic offer

As regards this parameter, many of the participating restaurateurs underlined the necessity to make the AC and what it stands for more widely known. Older members (joining before four to six years) mentioned that they had seen a positive yet moderate differentiation in clients as a result of AC membership. In many cases they stressed that a more dynamic communication is needed.

“The AC has helped me a lot, with clients that are looking for good quality and local cuisine (...) Greeks know about it more... a few foreigners also but in very small proportion.” (Int. 14)

“I think it does play a role... it is valued. However there isn’t a considerable increase [in clientele]. I think more would be aware of it from my own website and know about it, instead of doing so independently. It needs more focused promotion, and more dynamic (...) Maybe, it’s also a financial issue. Perhaps AC members should pay a fee to support the promotion. On the other hand, the Book they published [see Aegean Cuisine Chapter] is also a good promotion. It gives general idea and then who is interested will find particular establishments...” (Int. 16)

“It seems that it is rather unknown to foreigners...It is an issue that I will pose to the Chamber. (...) it needs better communication with abroad” (Int. 1)

Commenting on the promotion efforts by AC some participants juxtaposed the case of online review schemes that are widely used and showcased by restaurateurs.

“A lot seek for information on tripadvisor... which for me this has too many gaps. Anyone can enter and write whatever review... it's not reliable. For me AC is much more worth it, it just needs more promotion so people can trust it.”
(Int. 15)

“All professionals here are engaged with tripadvisor, that can also be a lie, since for us it's not like hotel reviews [identification of clients]. Couldn't AC do something like that? Some application?” (Int. 3)

Besides these shortcomings, AC members that participated in the interviews, characterized their membership as positive and that they felt that they also contributed to it. For most, the main motive for joining was having the AC as a quality assurance and incentive for evolving their establishments.

Views of non-members

Only half of participants that were not AC members had some knowledge about the initiative. These restaurateurs were not outright negative about considering joining in the future, however expressed concerns that mainly regarded about the set of criteria for entry and operation and overall organization.

“What means local cuisine and who judges this? I'm not so sure about it”
(Int. 5)

“I do have knowledge about AC and I think that it is rather something that has been set up quickly by people that have a certain perspective on gastronomy. But, for example, we cannot consider asparagus a traditional product of Naxos... so how can they have it on their menu? It is [the initiative] something of the previous decade that needs restructuring. It does have some good thing but it is not evolving. (...) We do need such initiatives and as such I believe that there should be again a collaboration of AC with local stakeholders related to food and built something from downwards to upwards so as to correct errors.” (Int. 6)

These remarks therefore stress the importance of further embeddedness of the AC in the local (particular island's) peculiarities. As we saw from the literature, adjusting to the local context (Bartella, 2011; Cavicchi & Ciampi Stancova, 2016) as well as the cooperation of terroir stakeholders (Montanari & Stanicia, 2009) has been considered of prime importance for the development of food tourism policies.

Chapter 5- Conclusions

This final chapter presents the main conclusions that were generated by seeking answers to the research sub-questions and ultimately the main research question. In addition recommendations for practitioners are provided while limitations are acknowledged and give incentive for further research.

5.1 Conclusions

Findings from Naxos as regards *aspects of connection of the gastronomic offer with the locality* show a strong commitment on part of participants that is expressed through local procurement and loyalty to the tradition but also accompanied with willingness and efforts of updating and evolving. These attributes, according to participants' input were largely intensified by inclusion in the AC network and in fact this was the most widely attested positive contribution of the initiative. On the other hand, findings also revealed that the wider picture in Naxos is rather more obscure since connection with the locality is often perceived and employed as a mere opportunity to take advantage of the benefits it is supposed to entail, benefits that are propelled by a general trend that values the local and traditional. However when this is not based on solid foundations of quality controls that regard practices of standardization and service eventually have detrimental effects on the overall gastronomic tourism potential of the destination.

Reflections of restaurateurs' on *cooperation among stakeholders* rather demonstrated weaknesses considering a tourism planning that facilitates tourism development in general and therefore provides a solid basis for other forms of tourism, including the gastronomic. Deficiencies in essential infrastructures of transportation were not only perceived as undermining factors because of their immediate effects on tourist arrivals and tourists' level of convenience in exploring Naxos' tourist product but also as a demonstration of the island's neglect within a sea of competing island destinations. Interestingly, the geographical divide between the more touristically developed western lowland and the mountainous inland seemed to expose a similar pattern of competition.

Without disregarding the small amount of participants from the mountain area, we could presume that their unanimous differentiation reveals a lacking collaboration of local stakeholders considering a tourist destination planning that encompasses the whole island. This is particularly important since much of Naxos' local production and traditional settlements, in other words some of its main differentiating assets are largely concentrated in the highland, central area. Despite examples of efficient collaboration for joint actions and collective improvement, a mentality of individualism was mentioned as a persistent trend for a significant proportion of entrepreneurs in the wider eating sector. For participating AC members the initiative's networking capabilities showed to have room for far greater empowerment as regards both producers and other eating establishments.

Regarding the *promotion of the gastronomic offer* local restaurateurs' insights suggested a more encompassing approach of the island's tourist product that was credited to the efforts of the Regional and municipal authorities. This was another demonstration of the acknowledgement of the gastronomic aspect in the island destination that was deemed to need intensification and enrichment. Beyond marketing the actions that support and showcase the gastronomic assets of the island and that entail interactivity and participation of visitors were described as underdeveloped, occasional and result of individual initiative. They provided however a solid basis that with further support could gain a more standardized and permanent character. This dimension is also strongly connected with the theme of cooperation among different stakeholders and so does the essential aspect of the overall tourism strategy of the destination. As such some participants stressed that in order for tourism to aim towards high-value returns it is imperative to stand on a solid basis of high quality standards and forward looking. Consequently promotion of the gastronomic product will also be more clear and substantial. The AC's effect on promoting aspects of its members was considered to be rather weak and besides its positive –yet small scale- contribution it was thought to be capable of much greater visibility and utility especially when juxtaposed with globally developed, yet less reliable rating schemes.

In order for the AC network to expand more, and become more appealing to prospective members from the research it seems that what is valued, besides tackling the

above mentioned issues, is the encompassing and deeper consultation with the local eating establishments so as its criteria to be formed in a more collective and representing way.

The above conclusions from the research on the Naxos case help us to embark on answering the main research question *“if gastronomic tourism is to develop, what are the reasons that might hinder this potential?”*. It seems that the answer in this question lies in the interconnectivity of the discussed themes. Issues of mentality and practices are affecting cooperation among various stakeholders while each of these and also in conjunction reflect the promotion strategy and eventually its effectiveness and reliability.

5.2 Limitations

A main limitation of this research as implied in the methodology section is its small scale. The small sample of restaurateurs, whose views are characterized by subjectivity give the incentive for a larger scale research that could include a wider spectrum of stakeholders and key informants that as we saw play significant roles in the development of gastronomic tourism. Restaurateurs' input although is generated from a wide visibility and understanding of the gastronomy tourism system is still one that has its limitations. Naxos is also a single case and any generalizability is also very limited, in spite –as we saw in the methodology section- the island's collection of some special characteristics that provided incentive for investigating this particular research problem. A comparative case study with other destinations that are more developed gastronomically in the vicinity could also prove a very valuable contribution to knowledge. Last but not least a more in-depth investigation of the researched themes will shed more light on their causes and ultimately their interconnectivity.

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APPENDIX 1

AC members

1. Since when does your restaurant operate?
2. Are you born and raised in Naxos?
3. Is the operation year round or seasonal?
4. When did you join the AC network?
5. What was your motive for AC membership?

Connection with the locality

6. How important for you and why is the connection of the menu with local foods and cuisine traditions? What is your practice in that direction?
7. Do you think that your views and practices regarding the importance of local foods and cuisine traditions are also shared by other local professionals and stakeholders? What is your perspective?

Promotion of the gastronomic offer/ gastronomic tourism

8. How do you evaluate the promotion of the gastronomic offer of the island?

Cooperation

9. How do you evaluate cooperation with other stakeholders (eating establishments, travel agencies, hotels, local population, producers, the public sector, and/or others) as regards support of your operation in particular and gastronomic tourism in general in the island?
10. Are there actions (festivals, routes, activities) organized by local stakeholders to support the gastronomic appeal of Naxos? How do you evaluate the current situation?

The AC initiative

11. What has been the effect of AC membership in all these respects?
12. How would you evaluate AC membership in relation to your initial expectations?

13. What do you propose for the improvement of the gastronomic appeal of Naxos?
14. Are there any other issues regarding the potential of gastronomic tourism that you would like to stress?

Non- AC members

1. Since when does your restaurant operate?
2. Are you from Naxos?
3. Is the operation year round or seasonal?

Connection with the locality

4. How important for you and why is the connection of the menu with local foods and cuisine traditions? What is your practice in that direction?
5. Do you think that your views and practices regarding the importance of local foods and cuisine traditions are also shared by other local professionals and stakeholders? What is your perspective?

Promotion of the gastronomic offer/ gastronomic tourism

6. How do you evaluate the promotion of the gastronomic offer of the island?

Cooperation

7. How do you evaluate cooperation with other stakeholders (eating establishments, travel agencies, hotels, local population, producers, the public sector, and/or others) as regards support of your operation in particular and gastronomic tourism in general in the island?
8. Are there actions (festivals, routes, activities) organized by local stakeholders to support the gastronomic appeal of Naxos? How do you evaluate the current situation?

The AC initiative

9. Do you know about the AC network?
10. What is your opinion and have you considered joining? Yes/ No and why?
11. What would you propose for the improvement of the gastronomic appeal of Naxos?

12. Are there any other issues regarding the potential of gastronomic tourism that you would like to stress?