

AGRI-FOOD AND TYPICAL PRODUCTS EVENTS: PROMOTIONAL TOOLS FOR A TERRITORY IN SOUTHERN ITALY

Eventos agroalimentarios y de productos típicos: instrumentos de promoción para un territorio del sur de Italia

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ABSTRACT: For most of the hilly, mountainous and inland areas, local and typical agri-food products represent an important tool for producing income, guaranteeing food and nutritional security, providing an answer to basic human needs and the desire to improve the quality of life. The survival of these areas is strongly linked to the persistence of these products, which, in addition to having to be profitable for the communities that produce them and who live from them, must also impose themselves within the framework of the competitiveness imposed by the markets. In fact, it happens that, for many of them, although the production conditions guarantee quality and food safety, the same cannot be said about their ability to compete with most of the semi-industrial productions. Thanks to consumers survey the study proposes a reading of the relationships between food and wine events / manifestations of an internal area in Southern Italy and some local food products offered in the stalls and food stands on occasion of such events. From a methodological point of view, it was decided to apply the “Social Network Analysis” (SNA), comparing gastronomic, folkloristic and cultural events that were detected in the area and with some local food products present in the stalls and stands. The area considered is very interesting with reference to the typical and traditional products, among which the less known and widespread

truffle has only recently begun to establish itself. The results showed that some of the products taken into consideration are recurrent, that is, always present in the various events in the area, others less so. The data shows the attractiveness that these events and gastronomic events are able to trigger in consumers and the interest and propensity to buy that the food of local tradition. In particular, tourists seek the experience of local gastronomy and the culture and identity of the destination visited. Reading these data provides some information on the competitive strength that food and wine events and local productions are able to arouse. Events and demonstrations such as those highlighted in the work help to preserve the identity and authenticity of local traditions.

KEYWORDS: Agri-food products; internal areas; Social Network Analysis (SNA); truffles; NWFP; Economical progress; Festival.

RESUMEN: Para la mayor parte de las zonas serranas, montañosas y del interior, los productos agroalimentarios locales y típicos representan una importante herramienta para generar ingresos, garantizar la seguridad alimentaria y nutricional, dando respuesta a las necesidades humanas básicas y al deseo de mejorar la calidad de vida. La supervivencia de estas áreas está fuertemente ligada a la persistencia de estos productos, que, además de tener que ser rentables para las comunidades que los producen y que viven de ellos, también deben imponerse en el marco de la competitividad que imponen los mercados. De hecho, sucede que, para muchos de ellos, si bien las condiciones de producción garantizan la calidad y la seguridad alimentaria, no se puede decir lo mismo de su capacidad para competir con la mayoría de las producciones semi-industriales. Gracias a una encuesta a los consumidores, este estudio propone una evaluación de las relaciones entre los eventos / manifestaciones gastronómicas y vinícolas de un área de interior del sur de Italia y algunos productos alimenticios locales que se ofrecen en los puestos de comida con motivo de tales eventos. Desde el punto de vista metodológico, se optó por aplicar el “Análisis de Redes Sociales” (ARS), comparando los eventos gastronómicos, folclóricos y culturales que se detectaron en la zona y con algunos productos alimenticios locales presentes en los puestos. El área considerada es muy interesante en cuanto a los productos típicos y tradicionales, entre los que la trufa es la menos conocida y extendida, y sólo ha comenzado a consolidarse recientemente. Los resultados mostraron que algunos de los productos tomados en consideración son recurrentes, es decir, siempre presentes en los diversos eventos de la zona, otros menos. Los datos muestran el atractivo que estos eventos y jornadas gastronómicas son capaces de suscitar en los consumidores y el interés y propensión a comprar los alimentos de tradición local. En particular, los turistas buscan la experiencia de la gastronomía local y la cultura e identidad del destino visitado. El análisis de estos datos proporciona información sobre la fuerza competitiva que pueden suscitar los eventos enogastronómicos y las producciones locales. Eventos y manifestaciones como los destacados en el trabajo ayudan a preservar la identidad y la autenticidad de las tradiciones locales.

PALABRAS CLAVE: Productos agroalimentarios; áreas de montaña; Análisis de Redes Sociales; trufas; NWFP; progreso económico; ferias.

1. Introduction

In recent years, coinciding with the growing interest of the media and with the multiplication of manifestations and events dedicated to food, agri-food products have progressively become a distinctive element of the territory and its most authentic vocations: the food and wine sector has been the soil fertile on which the concepts of typicality and tradition related to the recovery of culture, history and local knowledge have been grafted (Brunori *et al.*, 2020).

Many authors have dealt with the importance and role of the territory in the typification of local productions from different points of view (Sini, 1997; Brunori, 1999; Belletti, 2000; Arfini *et al.*, 2010). Several studies examine the participation of farmers and agri-food producers in local events and markets (Star *et al.*, 2020; Van der Lee *et al.*, 2020) and recently look at the concept of proximity economy and sustainable cities for the purpose of food supply and the need for adequate services available to the population (Vilhelmson & Elldér, 2021; Tricarico & Vidovich, 2021). Struš *et al.*, (2020), underline the im-

portance of community support to offer an alternative to current distribution channels.

The relationship between the concepts of local products, regional products and traditional products are illustrated by (Fernández-Ferrín *et al.*, 2019) through an approach in relation to the ethnocentric tendencies of consumers with high levels of subnational ethnocentrism, who appreciate locally produced food and in which the geographical proximity gives them a superior quality in terms of taste, freshness and sustainability, which derives from tradition and geographical origin.

The typicality of agri-food products is intimately connected to the territory, to which it owes, in addition to most of the distinctive elements, the specific recognition on the market (Belletti, 2000). The typical product materializes a perfect synthesis between material and intangible collective resources, makes use of well-established techniques of manipulation and conservation of valuable agricultural resources, but above all, it is the guardian of the culture, history and traditions of a territory (Nicolosi *et al.*, 2020). The notoriety of typical or traditional products is the basis of the mechanism that gives value to them, transforming

social and cultural surplus value into economic surplus value (De Sainte Marie & Casabianca, 1995).

The typical product is therefore a collective intangible resource and its notoriety or reputation, which refers to the territory, is itself an instrument and purpose for valorisation.

Freed from the anonymity to which they were relegated, some local food products have become the witnesses of a rediscovered food and wine identity and the vehicle of a positive message for the tourist image of the territories. In terms of marketing, each geographical area is committed to the effort to create the conditions for the differentiation of the offer aimed at capturing the growing interest and multiplication that revolves around exhibitions and events dedicated to food.

Hence the importance of animation, an activity through which opportunities for meeting, reflection, discussion and debate among the actors of the local community are created within the rural territory and between the territories, aimed at encouraging acquisition and sharing of knowledge and awareness and, on this basis, the will / ability to take an active part in the development of one's own territory.

Star *et al.*, (2020) in their study highlight the importance of food festivals and how, in developed countries, many rural communities have sought to stimulate their local economies through agritourism and food and wine events (Goulding *et al.*, 2014; Henderson, 2019; Walmesley, 2010). Other international studies have highlighted the importance for tourism of local economies of events also linked to culture, the environment, music, cinema and food. Food festivals, in particular, have gained increasing attention and an important role in local economies in promoting rural tourism and regional development (UNWTO, 2021).

The UNWTO's Committee on Tourism and Competitiveness (CTC) defines gastronomic tourism as a type of tourism activity that is characterized by the visitor's experience related to food and related products and activities while traveling. In addition to authentic, traditional and / or innovative culinary experiences, food tourism can also encompass other related activities such as visiting local producers, attending food festivals and attending cooking classes.

Sustainable tourism experiences or events are increasingly assuming an important role in the business models of artisanal agri-food producers, allowing them to eliminate intermediate steps in the supply chain and to sell their product directly to consumers with the possibility of adding value through tourist experiences (Stephen *et al.*, 2008; Arru *et al.*, 2021). Local products are a component of a territorial system that can become the symbolic capital of a place capable of making the products of the territory known and of transmitting reputation, trust, consent. In other cases, the agritourism offer is combined with social activities, with business innovation (Nicolosi *et al.*, 2021). The propensity for innovation, in fact, can become an important driver capable of increasing corporate profitability in agritourism businesses (Arru *et al.*, 2021; Ro-

man & Grudzień, 2021), in particular for the farmer who, in addition to tourism activity carries out social activity (Nicolosi *et al.*, 2021).

The proposed study looks at the relationship between the food and wine events proposed by local governance and the offer of local products in an internal agroforestry area of Southern Italy. From a broader perspective, in fact, promotion and rural animation, in internal areas such as those under study, may be able to develop marketing strategies oriented to forms of integration of the territories by leveraging on specific characteristics as an instrument of collective strengthening, also to overcome competitive mechanisms that may emerge between the neighboring territorial realities. (Urry, 2010)

In the case of inland and mountain areas there is a wide range of agricultural productions in addition to those coming from the forest. Many authors also highlight the value of non-wood forest products (Lovric *et al.*, 2020) and their role inside of ecosystem services both in terms of cultural heritage (Sacchelli *et al.*, 2021; Pardo-de-Santayana *et al.*, 2007), and in relation to the recreational and therapeutic function of forests (Droli *et al.*, 2021; Kangas & Markkanen, 2001; Sievänen *et al.*, 2004; de Aragón *et al.*, 2011; Pettenella, 2009; Cai *et al.*, 2011).

Paper aims to examine some research question and in particular:

1. Gastronomic events can constitute promotion occasion and trigger marketing strategies to support local agricultural entrepreneurship.
2. Events and gastronomic events are able to trigger in participants propensity and interest to buy food of local tradition?
3. Gastronomic events could improve travel satisfaction of tourists and vacationers?
4. How consumers preferences could influence purchase proximity products during gastronomic events?

As for consumers, reference is made to a sample interviewed in Calabria in the period 2017-2019 as part of research carried out on consumption preferences and places of purchase (Nicolosi *et al.*, 2020).

Visitors to events and gastronomic events increasingly ask for the experience of local food and cuisine, contact with nature, healthy nutrition, culture and identity of the place. As Stone *et al* point out in their research, (Stone *et al.*, 2019) dining experiences can also impact travel satisfaction and influence and engage others. The memory of food can influence the image of the place, attitudes, behaviors and future purchases (Stone *et al.*, 2019). The link with sustainable tourism can attract new forms of responsible tourism and guarantee alternative incomes to small agricultural production units (Arru *et al.*, 2021) and this also during the COVID-19 pandemic (Roman & Grudzień, 2021).

Among the agri-food products of the hilly / mountainous and inland areas, the truffle deserves a privileged place, both for the strong evocative impact that is well attached to the idea of mountains, parks, territories, communities, cultures; either because of the commercial pe-

cularities and the significant economic importance for the production regions (Pampanini *et al.*, 2012) although it is a niche market with an extremely fragmented supply and a demand that presents characteristics of oligopoly and monopsony in the stages of transformation and distribution. Italy is a leader in the world market: An Umbrian company currently holds (2019) 67% of the global market and operates in 70 countries around the world with a wide range of products from the truffle supply chain.

In this paper, topics highlighted above have been organized into five sections. The second section describes the methodological approach required, the data collection and the survey area study. In the third and fourth sections the results are illustrated and discussed, while in the fifth section some concluding considerations are outlined.

2. Materials and Methods

2.1. Methodological Approach

In the analysis carried out, it was decided to apply the Social Network Analysis (SNA) “or” Analysis of Social Networks “. It is a method that analyzes human resources and intervenes on them by reading and interpreting them as social networks. use of rigorous methodologies and specific calculation algorithms, graphical and metric representations are produced that allow us to understand how the organization works, which models it is inspired by, how people are placed in the network of relationships. Social Network Analysis also provides a formal and conceptual means to talk about social aspects (Wasserman & Faust, 1994). It is a quick application tool and allows you to represent a fluid and evolving reality (Carrington *et al.*, 2005). In general, it is from the diffusion of theoretical notions that great impetus has been given to the development of network methods (Wasserman & Faust, 1994). As part of this study, it was decided to use a particular type of bi-modal network, the “Affiliation Network”. The method has some properties that distinguish it, including the fact that a set of actors is related to a set of events in which the actors participate, thus allowing to study a relational system from a double perspective. In addition, the connections between the components of each set are obtained starting from the links established by each component of a set with the components of the other set (Breiger, 1974; Wasserman & Faust, 1994). We speak, in fact, of dual networks, precisely to emphasize the perspective in which the links between the actors are mediated by their participation in the event, and the events are connected to each other through the sharing of members. Starting from the affiliation matrix, two other matrices can be derived through matrix algebra operations. The networks obtained are uni-modal representations relating to the set of actors and that of events; the transition from the bi-modal network to two uni-modal networks involves obtaining matrices with value starting from a dichotomous and non-directional matrix, which reflect the intensity or frequency of the link (Wasserman &

Faust, 1994). For the purposes of analyzing the level of cohesion of the network, the following were considered: density, distance and centrality. These three aspects, each under a different profile, serve to provide information on the degree of cohesion of the network. The reading of this information is possible through some indexes that allow, for each aspect, the attribution of particular dimensions. Therefore, we will have as a measure of density the average density index, as a measure of distance the Average Distance and the Distance-based Cohesion and for the centrality measures the Degree, Close and Between indices.

The consumer analysis is inspired by a large sample of consumers interviewed on several occasions in Calabria in the period 2017-19 as part of research carried out on consumption preferences and places of purchase. The interviews involved 1,029 people intercepted by eight researchers adequately trained to administer the questionnaires. They were carried out “face to face” in crowded places where you could meet a sample with not very homogeneous characteristics, such as bus terminals, main roads, or intercepted at fairs and gastronomic events, near supermarkets, municipal markets, etc. The questionnaires administered look in particular at:

- the consumption of proximity local products
- to the place of purchase
- the reason for the choice

In this contribution, consumers were selected who agreed to buy typical local products on the occasion of gastronomic events organized by local authorities representing 26.6% of the interviewees (274 people, of which 31 tourists). The calculations look at the socio-economic aspects and the answers provided on a likert scale from 1 to 5 with reference to five questions regarding the following reasons for enjoying local artisan food:

1. Willingness to acquire knowledge of the local culture and have a new gastronomic experience;
2. Opportunities for sharing, meeting people and / or being together with the family;
3. Desire for prestige in the eyes of others, take pictures, tell friends and suggest the experience.

2.2. Data Collection and Study Area

This study focused on the Locride area in the province of Reggio Calabria. The area is characterized by economic and social fragility with unsatisfactory levels of growth and employment and which, to some significant extent, can be traced back to socio-economic factors such as widespread depopulation, especially in the innermost areas, the aging of the population, the abandonment of agricultural land, the abandonment of houses. However, the territorial context in its broadest sense, despite having numerous social and economic constraints, is endowed with innumerable material and intangible resources, territorial capital and human capital (environmental and cultural assets, productive excellence, secularized human capital, etc.) that the territory is able to express and systematically underutilized. Locride, in fact, is among the most evocative geographical areas of

Calabria: a strip of land squeezed between the last eastern buttresses of the Aspromonte and the Ionian coast, some of the municipalities that make up the area fall within the National Park of Aspromonte. The area is characterized by the suggestive medieval villages suspended on the Aspromonte hills. Locri, Gioiosa Ionica and Gerace are the most popular places. These villages, rich in history and tradition, frame a landscape full of contrasts and, without a doubt, one of a kind. The Locride area is also characterized by its traditions and its gastronomic specialties: in such a varied area there are many typical quality products, such as meats, oil and cheeses, mushrooms, berries, honey, to which add products of value like truffles. The survey of which we present the results, stems from the consideration that agri-food products have progressively become a distinctive element of the territory and its most authentic vocations in which the food and wine sector and the growing interest that revolves around local events and events dedicated to food, represent the essence on which the concepts of typicality and tradition related to the recovery of culture, history and local knowledge have been grafted.

Furthermore, through the festivals, fairs and events dedicated to food and gastronomy, they represent an occasion of celebration and meeting for residents and an attraction for vacationers and tourists looking for gastronomic experiences to taste and experience the local gastronomy and traditional. On these occasions, tourists and vacationers meet and communicate with the local population and their culture. It thus becomes a way to get in touch with the historical heritages of a territory and its community, consolidating the relationship between the “typical” local community, territory and tourist, historicizing and consolidating this relationship. As several authors have pointed out, the triad of food, places and communities is enriched by the spread of festivals and special events (Frost & Laing, 2013; Silkes *et al.*, 2013; Dimitrovski *et al.*, 2021), which they play a significant role in stimulating local economies as the activities and experiences that attract tourists favor job opportunities for local communities (Cafiero *et al.*, 2019). Such events can therefore represent a development opportunity for a territory and create income and employment through a virtuous chain that involves all operators who, for various reasons, come into play in the agri-food, food and wine and tourism system. It is crucial to note for the purposes of a complete vision of the possible solutions to the weaknesses deriving from the low economic impact on the territory of interest, which often lacks one, or more than one, of the following strengths: 1) the lack of a true and concrete will of aggregation between producers, even in the basic regulation of production processes - collection - treatment - transformation, etc.; 2) the absence of a prodromal “story telling” of the product and its links with traditions, communities and the territory itself, which is now indispensable in image sales processes. In this work we focused in particular on 18 events organized in 2018/2019 by 11 municipalities in the Locride area in the province of Reggio Calabria and focused on 16 main local gastronomy products proposed by local producers. As for consumers, surveys carried out in the province of Reggio Calabria on

a sample of 1029 interviewees in the period 2017-2019 showed that about 27% of the interviewees (274 people) buy local gastronomy products at fairs, food and wine events, among them about 11% are tourists.

In some cases, the gastronomic specialties present on the occasion of these local events are known and marketed on national and international markets; while others are produced in limited quantities and consumed only locally. We have paid particular attention to the truffle, “flag product” of the Locride area and to the possibility of enhancing the “Calabrian Truffle” in the belief that it is extremely necessary to activate promotional tools to collect all the economic and social opportunities that can be activate for local populations, in the same way as what has been done in other regions of Italy.

In the study, a basket of typical or traditional products of the Locride area was identified, for which it is proposed that specific forms of joint marketing can be activated in order to create virtuous synergies between producers (Maso *et al.*, 2006) and applied to such a *portfolio* of products, the Affiliation Network. In particular, in the Affiliation matrix that we have created, the rows indicate the actors / producers of 16 main agri-food and typical products, while the columns indicate the 18 events organized in 2019 by 11 municipalities of the investigated area and in which the producers participated (festivals, gastronomic events, fairs, etc.). Once collected, the data is organized in the Affiliation matrix, a dichotomous matrix formally referred to as:

$$A = \{a_{ij}\}$$

where $a_{ij} = 1$ if the actor row i participated in the event column j , or $a_{ij} = 0$ otherwise.

On the basis of the information collected, the incidence and adjacency matrices were constructed to examine the network relationships based on the choice of manifestations / events in which to participate.

For data processing, the UCINET 6.0 ver. 6.631, while for the graphic representation the NETDRAW ver.2.161.

To examine the network analysis, some network cohesion measures have been developed, in particular the density which represents one of the main indicators of the degree of cohesion of a network (Salvini & Miller, 2005) and the centrality, which measures how much a node is an actor important of the network. Density, in particular, represents one of the main descriptive measures adopted to investigate the degree of cohesion of the network. This index is given by the quantity of relationships and corresponds to the ratio between the number of links actually present in the network and those potentially activated.

With reference to consumers who buy local gastronomy products. The elaborations, after a brief description of the socio-economic characteristics of the interviewees, examine, through a specific question, on the reasons that lead them to seek and taste local foods, both in general and in particular for those who attend and buy at food and wine events.

3. Results

3.1. Products and events

As mentioned, the analysis related a set of food and wine events and events and a set of products. The events were organized in the municipalities of: Martone, Ciminà, Ardore, Africo, Bovalino, Bivongi, Bianco, Plati, Locri, Mammola and Gerace. The area is a portion of the larger one known as the Locride in the province of Reggio Calabria. The products considered are chestnuts, caciocavallo, Greek wine from Bianco, Gerace wine, Mantonico wine, caciotto, pecorino from Locride (PAT), lemons, EVO oil, IGT wine from Locride, smoked ricotta, prickly pear shovel juice, Mammola stock, Mammola breech, mushrooms and truffle (Figure 1).

In the municipalities of the Locride area, various events were organized in the period 2017-19 that represent an attraction for the local population and for tourists and vacationers, these are cultural events and conferences, gastronomic festivals, festivals, fairs, exhibitions-market of local products, patronal festivals.

Table 1 identifies the flagship products and the participation of local producers in the various types of events.

The producers participating in the events obviously have a diversified range of sales and marketing of their products, both locally and nationally and, in some cases, even internationally. However, their participation in the Events and Shows organized by the municipalities has a social value of belonging and presence in the territory. The most well-known products such as those that can boast a quality marks (PDO, PGI, Slow Food, etc.), represent an additional attraction for participants in gastronomic events, the niche ones, which are more difficult to find, represent an opportunity for consumers to be found.

Network analysis applied examines only the products present during various events. The density represents one of the main indicators of the degree of cohesion of the Network. As can be seen from the table below (Table 2), the density value is 57.5% and represents a good degree of cohesion, confirmed by the standard deviation of 0.4943. The Geodesics distances also show that the pairs of actors are close together and that the producers are well connected to each other.

Table 3 examines the Network Centrality measures.

In the empirical analysis of social networks, the con-



Figure 1. Some of mentioned products. From the top left: Mushrooms, Stocco, Truffles and Caciocavallo di Ciminà.

Figura 1. Algunos de los productos mencionados. Desde arriba a la izquierda: Champiñones, Stocco, Trufas y Caciocavallo di Ciminà.

Table 1. Local products and participation of producers by type of events (in the period 2017-2019).

Tabla 1. Productos locales y participación de productores por tipo de eventos (en el periodo 2017-2019).

| Flagship product | Presence in gastronomic events in the Locride area% |
|---|---|
| Castagne (Chestnuts) | 50.0 |
| Caciocavallo di Ciminà (Ciminà “Caciocavallo cheese”) | 50.0 |
| Vino Greco (Greco wine) | 55.6 |
| Vino Gerace (Gerace wine) | 55.6 |
| Vino Mantonico (Mantonico wine) | 44.4 |
| Funghi (Mushrooms) | 55.6 |
| Tartufi (Truffles) | 33.3 |
| Caciotto (Caciotto cheese) | 16.7 |
| Pecorino (Pecorino T.A.P) | 33.3 |
| Locrese Lemoncetta | 5.6 |
| Olio EVO locale (Local extra virgin olive oil) | 61.1 |
| Vino DOC locale (D.O.C local wine) | 50.0 |
| Ricotta affumicata (Smoked ricotta) | 22.2 |
| Succo di Pala di fico d’india (Prickly pear juice) | 5.6 |
| Stocco di mammola (Stocco fish of Mammola) | 55.6 |
| Culatta di Mammola (Cured meat of Mammola) | 16.7 |

Source: own elaborations

Table 2. Network cohesion measures. Density expressed in percentage values.

Tabla 2. Medidas de cohesión de la red. Densidad expresada en valores porcentuales.

| Debsities, Standard deviation | |
|---|--------|
| Density (matrix average) | 57.50% |
| Standard deviation | 0.4943 |
| Geodesic distance | |
| Average distance (among reachable pairs) | 1.182 |
| Distance-based cohesion (“Compactness”) | 0.629 |
| Distance-weighted fragmentation (“Breadth”) | 0.371 |

Source: own elaborations

cept of centrality takes on particular relevance as it allows you to position an actor in your network in purely relational terms. Centrality can be expressed in three ways: Degree Centrality, Closeness Centrality and Betweenness Centrality.

Table 3. Descriptive statistics: Degree, Close, Between.

Tabla 3. Estadísticos descriptivos: Grado, Cercano, Entre.

| | (InDegree) NormInDegree % | InCloseness % | nBetweenness |
|------------------------------|---------------------------|---------------|--------------|
| Chestnuts | (12) 80.000 | 83.333 | 0.517 |
| Ciminà Caciocavallo cheese | (15) 100.000 | 100.000 | 2.200 |
| Greco wine | (13) 86.667 | 88.235 | 0.759 |
| Gerace wine | (15) 100.000 | 100.000 | 1.446 |
| Mantonico wine (white) | (9) 60.000 | 71.429 | 0.163 |
| Mushrooms | (12) 80.000 | 83.333 | 4.643 |
| Truffles | (5) 33.333 | 53.571 | 0.254 |
| Plati Caciotto cheese | (2) 13.333 | 7.143 | 0.000 |
| Pecorino T.A.P | (5) 33.333 | 9.091 | 0.068 |
| Locrese Lemoncetta | (1) 6.667 | 6.667 | 0.000 |
| Local extra virgin olive oil | (15) 100.000 | 100.000 | 1.446 |
| D.O.C local wine | (12) 80.000 | 83.333 | 0.782 |
| Smoked ricotta | (3) 20.000 | 7.692 | 0.000 |
| Prickly pear juice | (1) 6.667 | 6.667 | 0.000 |
| Stocco fish of Mammola | (15) 100.000 | 100.000 | 1.584 |
| Cured meat of Mammola | (3) 20.000 | 7.692 | 0.425 |
| Statistiche descrittive | | | |
| Max | (15) 100.000 | 100,000 | 4.643 |
| Min | 6.667 | 6.667 | 0,000 |
| Mean | (8.625) 57.500 | 26.541 | 0,893 |
| Std Dev | (5.395) 35.969 | 27.989 | 1,174 |

Source: own elaborations

The first measure is the simplest and looks at the choices made by the actors (Products). The values indicated respectively represent: The Index the number of participation in the events (the table is indicated in brackets); while the Norm In Degre is a standardized data (divided by n-1) indicated as a percentage.

The second measure examines the distance between the points, so a node is more central if it is located at the shortest distance from many other nodes, i.e. it is closer to many other points (in our study the reference is relative to the other products / events) also the value of this measure is a standardized datum.

The third measure examines to what extent a product is able to trigger an intermediation, in our case it repre-

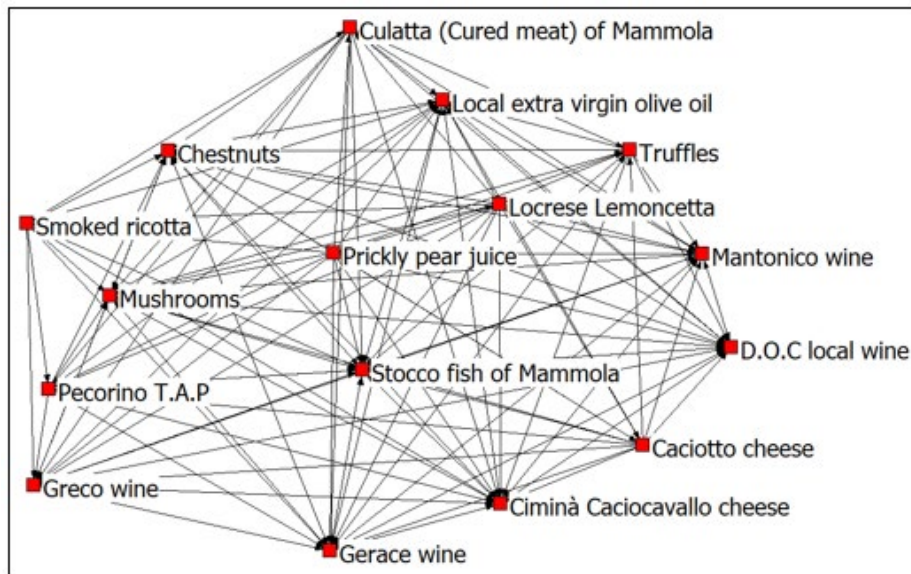


Figure 2. Sociometrist network of relations between products present in food and wine events organized in the area from municipalities. Source: own calculations.

Figura 2. Red sociométrica de relaciones entre productos presentes en eventos gastronómicos y enológicos organizados en el territorio desde los municipios. Fuente: Elaboración Propia



Figure 3. Map of the networks of relations resulting from the application of the SNA: recognition of the products present in the events organized by the municipalities of Locride. The blue squares are the names of the municipalities while the red dots are the products. Source: own elaborations. In the map, the authors wanted to leave the names of the products in the original language to emphasize the importance of the connection with the territory.

Figura 3. Mapa de las redes de relaciones resultantes de la aplicación del SNA: reconocimiento de los productos presentes en los eventos organizados por los municipios de Locride. Los cuadrados azules son los nombres de los municipios mientras que los puntos rojos son los productos. Fuente: elaboración propia. En el mapa, los autores han querido dejar los nombres de los productos en el idioma original para enfatizar la importancia de la conexión con el territorio.

sents a push towards the fruition of events show more links in the various events of Locride are highlighted: Olio Evo, Ciminà Caciocavallo cheese, Gerace wine and Stocco di Mammola, followed by Greco wine, Mushrooms and Chestnuts. The lowest links was recorded by Lemoncetta and prickly pear Pala juice (just 6.6%), the other products show links at events ranging from 20% to 60%. In the case of Closeness Centrality, it is a question of examining the most central and most peripheral nodes in relation to the distance between the points. It means that a node is more central if it is located closer to the other nodes. Also in this case, what is shown with the measure relating to density is confirmed, therefore Olio Evo, Gerace wine, Ciminà Caciocavallo cheese and Stocco di Mammola have the greatest incidences (100%), while pecorino PAT, Culatta di Mammola, smoked ricotta, caciotto, Lemoncetta and prickly pear shovel juice remain the most peripheral products (from 6.6% to 9.0%) in relation to their ability to participate in food and wine events in the Locride area.

Finally, the measure of Centrality as an interposition (Betweenness Centrality), does not look at the direction of the bond, but indicates how much a person is intermediary between two other people within the group. In our case Mushrooms (4,643), Caciocavallo di Cimunà (2.200), Stocco di Mammola (1.584), Gerace wine and Local extra virgin olive oil (1.446) are the most central and significant products in the representation of the potential of the productive reality of Locride.

Figure 2 shows the sociometric network of relations between producers and food and wine events (exhibitions, fairs, conferences, etc.) in the Locride area, as you can see each relationship is represented by an oriented arrow, as the relationship is considered asymmetrical.

Figure 3 shows the map of the relationship networks resulting from the analysis. Specifically, it is a survey of the products present in the events organized by the municipalities of Locride. The names of the products have been indicated in the original language.

3.2. Consumers

From the elaborations (Table 4) it emerges that most of the consumers interviewed are aged between 31 and 50 years (38.7%), with a slight prevalence of women (50.3%). The highest percentage for the scholastic level is recorded between the high school (31.2%) and the degree (40.2%). Household income is equally distributed between the upper middle and lower middle classes (32.8% in both cases). They are residents of Calabria (55.8%), about 11% say they are on vacation at the time of the interview. The preferred shopping places also for local handicraft products in the proximity are large-scale distribution and retail (55.7%). About 20% of the interviewees shop at the City market. Those who buy these products regularly or occasionally at events, festivals and food and wine events represent 24.4% of the sample. The events,

Table 4. - Descriptive statistic of the sample
 Tabla 4. Estadística descriptiva de la muestra

| Indication | | n. | % |
|---|--------------------|-----|------|
| Gender | Male | 511 | 49.7 |
| | Female | 518 | 50.3 |
| Age | 18-30 years | 361 | 35.1 |
| | 31-50 years | 398 | 38.7 |
| | 51-60 years | 138 | 13.4 |
| | >60 years | 132 | 12.8 |
| Education | Middle school | 113 | 11.0 |
| | High school | 321 | 31.2 |
| | University Degree | 414 | 40.2 |
| | Post University | 181 | 17.6 |
| Family Income | High | 65 | 6.3 |
| | Upper middle | 338 | 32.8 |
| | Lower middle | 337 | 32.8 |
| | Low | 88 | 8.6 |
| Why at place of survey | Live there | 459 | 55.8 |
| | Work there | 128 | 15.6 |
| | Holiday | 91 | 11.1 |
| | Other | 144 | 18.5 |
| | No answers | 207 | 20.1 |
| Preference per the place of purchase of local/artisan product | City market | 205 | 19.9 |
| | Hypermarket/retail | 573 | 55.7 |
| | Gastronomic events | 251 | 24.4 |

Source: own elaborations

Table 5. - Reasons to enjoy proximity local / artisanal food
 Tabla 5. Razones para disfrutar de la comida local/artesanal de proximidad.

| | 1(*) | 2(*) | 3(*) | 4(*) | 5(*) | total |
|---|------|------|------|------|------|-------|
| Willingness to acquire knowledge of the local culture and have a new gastronomic experience; | 6.2 | 8.9 | 21.8 | 32.7 | 30.4 | 100.0 |
| Opportunities for sharing, meeting people and / or being together with the family; | 8.0 | 10.4 | 17.1 | 27.6 | 36.9 | 100.0 |
| Desire for prestige in the eyes of others, take pictures, tell friends and suggest the experience.; | 18.7 | 8.9 | 23.1 | 26.2 | 23.1 | 100.0 |

(*) Percentage values on Likert scale from 1 (not at all important) to 5 (very, very important). Source: own elaborations

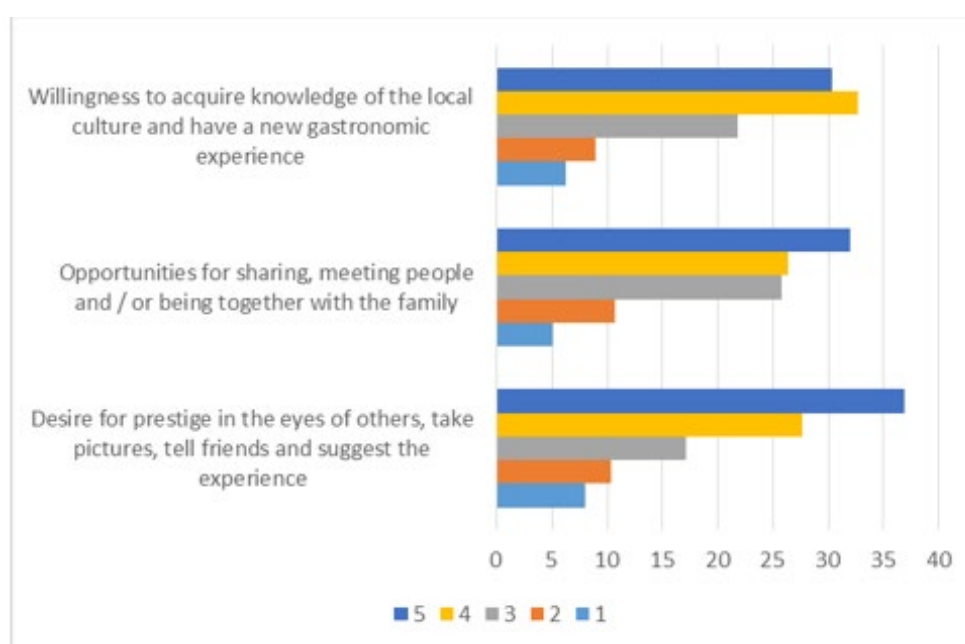


Figure 4. Reasons to enjoy proximity local foods
 Figura 4. Razones para disfrutar de la comida local de proximidad

in many cases, also represent an opportunity for a family outing for local consumers.

The results of the Table 5 show that for the interviewees the link with the territory and the desire to acquire local knowledge and culture through local food is important, linking them to new gastronomic experiences, local culture and the possibility of meeting people, 63.1% responded positively (32.7% a lot and 30.4% a lot). Consumers affirm the importance of associating specific sensory emotions such as aromas, taste, touch, well-being experienced to that place, linked to the social matrix given by the food of that territory and the surrounding landscape (58.4% a lot and a lot) and for 21.8% it is on average important. To escape the routine is one reason deemed less important than the other reasons (52.4%). Food experienced as conviviality and an opportunity for sharing to meet people and be together with friends and family is considered very and very important (64.5%), only 18.4%

consider it of little or no importance. Finally, the desire to obtain prestige and tell friends about their experiences on vacation also through the description of local dishes and foods records a high interest in 49.3%, while this aspect is of no or little interest to 27.6% of the interviewees.

4. Discussion

In the study presented, through the examination of the structure of the relationship of the group of typical or traditional products, an initial assessment of the relational capacity of producers was proposed. The study of centrality, for example, provides information on their degree of social integration. For many, if not all of these productions, the best criterion for valorization appears, without a doubt, the transformation of the simple gesture of consumption into an experiential opportunity for

direct tasting on the production sites (Pencarelli *et al.*, 2015). Moreover, this is confirmed by the fact that these productions activate various points of consumption (the most representative example is the case of the Mammola stocco). On the other hand, the situation is more complex with reference to other products which, in fact, are present with a slightly lower degree. For these, it is the case of the Truffle, the Gerace wine or the Caciocavallo, and even more so for the Greco di Bianco wine, much still needs to be done, in terms of consumption opportunities but also in terms of production, given that it deals with rather limited productions but which show interesting potential.

In particular, with reference to the Calabrian Truffle, the natural presence of the truffle in the area under analysis justifies the attention paid. In particular, in the pre-Aspromonte area it is now certain that it is possible to operate on two different realities: protecting and expanding the existing truffle grounds while respecting the existing truffle heritage and encouraging the creation of artificial truffle grounds. After all, it is known that, despite the truffle market, it has niche dimensions, its economic importance for the territory and its image inextricably linked to food and wine is relevant for the production regions, given the concentration in limited territorial areas (Bencivenga & Baciarelli Falini, 2012; Pampanini *et al.*, 2012).

The truffle can therefore be seen as an economic-territorial development tool (Samilis *et al.*, 2008). Furthermore, in terms of image, the link between truffles, woods, parks and the territory is very strong and not fully explored in terms of potential for attraction from a tourist point of view in Aspromonte. This bond has offered large spaces and opportunities to all the regions that have exploited its potential in Tuscany, Abruzzo, Umbria (Marone, 2011; Bencivenga & Baciarelli Falini, 2012; Brun & Mosso, 2013). Artificial truffle fields allow to recover and enhance marginal territories, to introduce new employment and new income opportunities, allow to promote potentialities related to gastronomic tourism that revolves around the production of truffles and gastronomy based on truffles (fresh and / or processed). Furthermore, recent studies reveal that in the Mediterranean regions, although cultural practices could lead to genetic mixing, no difference in genetic diversity was detected between spontaneous and cultivated populations (Taschen *et al.*, 2016).

As is evident, it is a question of promoting growth strategies for Calabria and of providing new tools for productive differentiation, employment and income for farmers in marginal areas otherwise destined for depopulation and degradation.

The various operators of the truffle supply chain (quarrymen, agricultural entrepreneurs, traders, processors, distributors, restaurateurs, chefs), show very strongly the interest that revolves around the sector which is perceived as very attractive in the light of the economic crisis and offers opportunities of promising commercial activities.

Moreover, the propensity of the modern consumer is to explore more and more the link between the territory and the quality of the food purchased and to recognize the social and cultural value of “place / economic space”

where the product is born and developed (Hjalager & Richards, 2002; Nicolosi *et al.*, 2019; Oostindie *et al.*, 2016; Resano *et al.*, 2011; van Ittersum *et al.*, 2007).

Consumer surveys also highlight the importance of food and wine events in the promotion of food and territory. The reasons are related to the places where you live or are on vacation or at work. For the interviewees, therefore, there is a strong desire to strengthen or acquire local knowledge and cultures through local food, linking them to new gastronomic experiences, affirming the importance of associating specific sensory emotions such as touch, perfumes and the surrounding landscape, the well-being you feel. Sensations linked to the social matrix given by the typical food of a specific territory. Food is experience as a conviviality and an opportunity for sharing to meet people, to obtain prestige and to tell the experiences of one's friends through the description of local dishes and foods.

5. Conclusions

Finally, it is necessary to make a brief reflection on the meaning of the events and manifestations considered in the study. These are significant promotional opportunities in which the products themselves become the real protagonists. Above all, these events make it possible to shift the enhancement and promotion from the companies to the territory with a view to commonality and sharing. Events and manifestations such as those highlighted in the work help to preserve the identity and authenticity of local traditions in order to generate work and employment. Food and wine represents an opportunity to encourage and diversify tourism, promote local economic development, involve many different professional sectors and bring new uses to the primary sector, enhancing and rewarding authenticity. The typicality of agri-food products is intimately connected to the territory, to which it owes, in addition to most of the distinctive elements, specific recognition on the market. The typical product materializes a perfect synthesis between material and intangible collective resources, makes use of consolidated techniques of manipulation and conservation of valuable agricultural resources, but above all it is the guardian of the culture, history and traditions of a territory and is, at the same time, a tool and purpose of enhancement (Nicolosi *et al.*, 2020).

Finally, with reference to the limits of the contribution, an in-depth study could include the possibility of interviewing the producers, as protagonists of the gastronomic proposal and themselves, an active part among the actors of the events.

Finally, the experience of COVID 19 made us understand how important it is to have naturalistic paths and trails in the open air and in health safety, where it is the territory that guarantees and delivers ecosystem services. The Locride area, rich in history, culture, natural landscapes of high environmental and socio-cultural interest and valuable products, has all the potential to activate virtuous processes of sustainable development from an economic point of view and social potential which, if adequately

protected, can lead to the improvement of the structure of local communities, thanks to a balanced and eco-sustainable use of the territories and to communication and environmental education actions.

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