

# Tourism Sustainable Practices in Rural Territories: The case of *Caretos de Podence*

## Práticas de Sustentabilidade em Turismo nos Territórios Rurais: Caretos de Podence

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**Abstract** | In rural communities several elements attract the contemporary tourist, such as the authenticity of the culture, being of particular importance the involvement of residents, as a key factor for the emancipation of the community and for local development. In this context, the question "How can a rural community emancipate itself through tourism activity?" arises. This article aims to present reflections on integrating the principles of sustainability in tourism, in these communities. The research presents as a case study a village in Portugal, Podence, which is characterized by the socio-economic dynamization of its intangible cultural heritage, distinguished by UNESCO. Following a qualitative approach, the method of semi-structured interviews was applied to understand the local perspective on tourism development. The results show the positive contribution of tourism activity to the community, through cultural enhancement and by the dynamization of the local economy. The importance of the cultural legacy for the well-being of the population, contributing to its sense of belonging, is notorious.

**Keywords** | Rural community, cultural heritage, local perspectives, tourism sustainability.

**Resumo** | Nas comunidades rurais vários elementos atraem o turista contemporâneo, como a autenticidade da cultura, sendo de particular importância o envolvimento dos residentes, enquanto fator chave para a emancipação da comunidade e para o desenvolvimento local. Neste contexto, surge a questão "Como pode uma comunidade rural emancipar-se através da atividade turística?". Este artigo tem como

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objetivo a apresentação de reflexões de integração dos princípios da sustentabilidade no turismo, nestas comunidades. A investigação apresenta como estudo de caso uma aldeia de Portugal, Podence, que se caracteriza pela dinamização socioeconómica do seu património cultural imaterial, distinguido pela UNESCO. Através da abordagem qualitativa, aplicou-se o método das entrevistas semiestruturadas, para compreender a perspetiva local sobre o desenvolvimento turístico. Os resultados evidenciam o contributo positivo da atividade turística para a comunidade, por via da valorização cultural e pela dinamização da economia local. É notória a importância que o legado cultural tem para o bem-estar da população, contribuindo para o seu sentido de pertença.

**Palavra-chave** | Comunidade rural, património cultural, perspetivas locais, sustentabilidade turística

## 1. Introduction

The World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) defines Sustainable Tourism as one that "considers its current and future economic, social and environmental impacts, meeting the needs of visitors, industry, the environment and the communities that host them" (UNEP & UNWTO, 2005 p. 12). Rural areas, according to Kastenholz et al., (2014), due to their fragility in the ecological, economic, and socio-cultural spheres, are territories where development must necessarily be sustainable. Tourism in rural areas has been presented as a vector of sustainable development, capable of generating several benefits. Pimentel and Chaves Pimentel (2015) refer the creation of employment and income, the fight against rural exodus, the proposal of socio-economic networks, the rescue and enhancement of cultural and natural heritage, the improvement of the quality of life of the local population, among others. The trilogy of rural-cultural-tourism is portrayed in tourist literature. Mikuska and Maganhotto (2019), understand that tourism in the rural areas contributes to the protection of the natural, historical, and cultural heritage of the countryside. European Union (2019, p.3) has a clear vision on what should be the guiding principle of sustainable cultural tourism: integration of the community in decision-

making processes, and defines sustainable cultural tourism "as the integrated management of cultural heritage and tourism activities together with the local community, creating social, environmental and economic benefits for all stakeholders in order to achieve tangible and intangible cultural heritage conservation and sustainable tourism development". In agreement with Reis and Baltazar (2019) it is considered opportune to understand how territories of low density have gained new functionalities due to recent tourist motivations and consumption. Also, it is important to consider, as stated by Serrão and Costa (2020), that events have become an integral part of the economic and cultural strategies of the regions, creating a differentiation and development of destinations, and it is important, within the scope of the sustainable development of a tourism destination, to offer a wide range of tourist entertainment activities in order to increase the length of stay and the loyalty of visitors (Gonçalves & Costa, 2020). Considering this perspective, the general objective of this research is to present reflections about the integration of sustainability principles of tourism in rural communities. The specific objective is to understand the opinion of local people about the village's development through tourism. Moreover, the purpose is to present a solid theory on the positive externalities of the tourist activity for the

emancipation and revitalization of the rural environment, in an intrinsic connection with the cultural heritage that characterizes it.

Regarding the structure of the article, the first part analyses recent literature. Then, the case study is presented, followed by the methodological background and the objectives of the research. Finally, the results are presented and discussed, as well as the theoretical and practical implications and recommendations.

## 2. Literature Review

### 2.1 Revitalisation of communities and rural areas through sustainable tourism

The need to bring the Portuguese rural areas closer to the positive externalities of tourism is widely portrayed in literature (Lopes et al., 2016; Eusébio et al., 2017; Pereiro, 2018; Amaral, 2019; Bordonaro, 2020). Reis and Baltazar (2019) recognize public and private efforts to integrate inland regions in the national tourism strategy and in national and community territorial development programmes. From the perspective of the authors, this is one of the reasons that leads rural areas to intervention and reconversion projects, prepared for the new types of tourism and new demand profiles. In all cases, the interventions sought, based on the new model of endogenous and participatory development, to promote the development of the territory through the valorisation of endogenous resources for new tourism consumption.

Rural regions are undergoing profound socio-economic changes that make it necessary to transform and diversify the livelihoods of the inhabitants (Carvalho & Chávez, 2017; Gao & Wu, 2017). Public and private entities, institutions and governments currently recognize tourism as an activity that can diversify the sources of income of these populations (Lane & Kastenholz, 2015). There are

several recent studies that describe rural areas as places of consumption and not exclusively of production, linked to agricultural activity (Soares da Silva et al., 2016; Eusébio et al., 2017). According to Amaral (2019) resources enhancement can contribute to the settlement of the population by obtaining income from the sustainable marketing of tourism products, maintaining the link between the past, the present and the future. Literature presents evidence on population fixation, emigrants' return, or even the attraction of new residents, through tourism. Santos et al., (2019, p.16) consider that return emigration will play a critical role in the sustainability of tourism. "Emigrants are agents of development in their countries/regions of origin, and their participation should be facilitated by tourism development projects which stimulate the economy of these territories".

Despite the multiple opportunities, today the travel industry also faces several challenges (Uysal et al., 2016) such as social instability, economic, socio-cultural, and environmental sustainability issues, distribution of benefits, combating the negative impacts of tourism exploration, among others. For the most fragile receiving communities, such as those of rural destinations, tourism can often have negative impacts. Eslami et al., (2019) present some studies which have found that residents with a greater sense of belonging to their community tend to perceive the impacts of tourism more negatively. From this point of view, tourism needs to be strategically directed towards sustainability. The long-term objective (Carvalho & Chávez, 2017) will be to provide high quality tourism experiences, avoiding the excessive exploration of any resource, thinking about its full enjoyment by future generations. According to Nunkoo and Gursoy (2017) sustainable tourism is also defined by the controlled exploitation of the territory's own resources.

According to recent research (Nørgaard & Thuesen, 2020; Rinaldi et al., 2020), the endogenous development model at regional and local level ma-

kes it possible to transform (unbridled) growth into (sustainable) development through dialogue and coordination with all the actors in the region. From this perspective, community development can only be balanced and promising if it relies on close collaboration and synergy from all parties. Agreeing with the benefits of this model, Idziak et al., (2015) state that members of these communities collectively create tourism products and experiences through their participation in tourism development processes. This concept of endogenous development is better understood if applied to economically disadvantaged territories (Piacenti et al., 2016), as it is there those local residents feel a great lack of conformity regarding the poor performance of prosperity indicators.

For Gao and Wu, (2017) the typology of tourism used to revitalize villages is nonsignificant, the essential thing is that the rights and interests of the residents are always considered, since they are the ones who live in the territory on a daily basis and influence their social environment.

McHenry (2011) on the emancipation of rural areas says that a wide variety of festivals and celebrations, where the community unites, can contribute to a greater sense of belonging as well as provide better quality of life and revitalization. Uysal et al., (2016) affirm that the references to the quality of life or the well-being of the community, are usually related to psychological constructs and therefore subjective, such as well-being, happiness, satisfaction with life and perceived quality of life.

## **2.2. Authenticity as a modern tourist attraction: valuing cultural practices**

Regarding the latest trends in cultural tourism, Richards (2018) points out that contemporary cultural tourism is increasingly related to ways of life and the daily culture of communities, and that the motivations of their demand are often linked to interest in authenticity. Therefore, it is not surprising

that new types of tourism are increasingly emerging which allows authenticity to be experienced in several ways. Khanom et al., (2019) presents several author's perspectives of authenticity, however, the relative and subjective view of authenticity is consensual: differs from tourist to tourist (Yi et al., 2018). Social developments throughout history have led to different approaches within tourism demand. Kannisto (2018) says that a multitude of travel styles have emerged in recent years to respond to the new concerns of tourists. His study is illustrative of the fact that people have gained a new sense of consumption with environmental, ethical, and social concerns in the communities receiving visitors.

Much of what is linked to the past, i.e., its origin, seems to be understood as authentic. This characterization of authenticity, according to Domínguez-Quintero et al., (2019) means that it can be considered a key factor in cultural and heritage tourism. The authentic experiences, for Amaral (2019) provide knowledge and contact with ancestral ways of life, valuing the culture of the place, which greatly enriches the tourist experience. Lee et al. (2016) concluded that authenticity is an important factor in value assessments, since it acts as an indicator of quality of destinations whose offer focuses on heritage. Matos and Barbosa (2018) state that this authenticity is built throughout the visit and is negotiated between the tourist and the resident. Kastenholz et al., (2020) understand that the interaction between the hosts (residents) and the guests (tourists) is highly valued and contributes positively to the overall experience of a rural destination.

The advantages associated with offering authenticity in today's tourism proposals are well documented (Castéran & Roederer, 2013; Akhondnejad, 2016), both concluded that authenticity, often taken with a non-measurable concept, finally has real value and quantifiable impacts. The authors realized that the repetition of visits depended on the authenticity perceived by tourists,

whose loyalty is associated with the recognition of the faithful representation of history, tradition, and values. According to Suhartanto et al., (2020) loyalty in tourism is reflected in the frequency of visits to attractions or destinations.

It is noticeable the search for more isolated destinations with great cultural richness all over the world. An example is the "traditional villages" presented by Gao and Wu (2017). By 2016 some 4000 Chinese villages were identified as "traditional" and therefore of great national and even international interest as many of them are UNESCO World Cultural Heritage sites. According to Su and Lin (2014), a country increasing the number of World Heritage classifications will have a significant and strongly positive effect on the arrivals of international tourists. There will be a mutual benefit in the relationship between heritage and tourism. The heritage is authenticated, leading to joint efforts for its preservation and the tourism economy is leveraged.

The growing demand for authenticity, associated with a greater degree of immersion in local communities, may induce some negative impacts, especially if the assumptions of sustainability are not considered. Recent studies report this concern, as Khanom et al., (2019) and Bear et al. (2020), and highlight this demand for the "true", "original" or "untouched", as inducing, in resident communities, economic interest and distorted ambition. Bear et al., (2020) portray this reality as "false façade of authentic heritage, history and culture" staged by the host community. Khanom et al., (2019) reflect on these impacts specifically on intangible cultural heritage. European Union (2019, p.3) considers that "many tourist destinations face serious challenges from overcrowding, massification, cultural appropriation, excessive folklore of cultural heritage and loss of authenticity. This has contributed to a rejection of tourism by local citizens".

### 3. Methodology

#### 3.1 Case study Podence Village

This investigation focused on Podence, a markedly rural village of around 200 inhabitants. It belongs to the municipality of Macedo de Cavaleiros, region of Terras de Trás-os-Montes, in Portugal. The choice of Podence is based on its connection with the tourist activity, as Costa reports (2016, p.102) "Tourism has become important for the village, not only as a source of income, but also because of the consequent cultural dynamism. The Podence Carnival is a case where the cultural heritage has been economically profitable, largely by the local population and in a very comprehensive way". This Carnival is specifically characterized by the "assortment" of the Caretos, the name by which the masked are known, who running and jumping around the village during that festive period, have as their main objective when incarnating the masked character, to rattle the women with rhythmic hip movements.

In 2017, the Podence Carnival was inscribed in the National Inventory of Immaterial Cultural Heritage, which highlights the importance of tourism for the dynamics and projection of the festival. "Today the village is visited during the Carnival by neighbours of the villages and nearby towns, friends and family, curious and national tourists from all over the country and even international visitors (...). During the three days of celebration there is a programme of parallel activities, such as exhibitions that explore the theme of the festival, a fair of regional products and traditional music concerts, among others, aimed at both the community and the reception of tourists and visitors"(Inventory no.: INPCI\_2017\_001). This Festivity integrates, since 2019, the Representative List of the World Cultural Heritage (UNESCO).



**Figure 1** | Caretos of the Podence village  
Source: 7 Maravilhas de Portugal® – authentic villages

A case study, already applied several times in scientific research, as a research strategy (Yin, 2017), is considered useful for answering "how and why" questions. In most cases, this method selects a small geographical area or a very limited number of individuals as subjects of the study (Ebneyamini & Sadeghi Moghadam, 2018). The village of Podence was considered, answering the question "How can a rural community emancipate itself through tourism?".

### 3.2 Qualitative research

Theoretical and in-depth study was used. It is from the perspective of a small number of participants, considered the best informants, that the researcher understands the reality which he intends to study (Hennink et al., 2020). The interview was selected to know and understand the participant's point of view. In this case, the researcher, as an interviewer, should not be someone who contaminates or biases the data, but rather a data co-creator, as his prior knowledge can play an important role in understanding the participant's accounts (McGrath et al., 2019). The interview technique used was the semi-structured, which establishes an order of questions with all the themes appropriate

to the research, but which allows flexibility in the participant's response and reflection. Flick (2018) states that individual interviews are appropriate for gathering detailed information about each participant's perspective and that they provide an environment of privacy answering questions in a truthful and genuine way.

### 3.3 Participants

Eight residents were involved in the research. All of them, with connections to the village of Podence, at personal and/or professional level. For this reason, they are aware of the tourist reality of the village. Regarding their relation to the village and its cultural dynamics (Table 1) it was not considered relevant to trace their sociodemographic profile, since the inclusion of each participant considered the necessary heterogeneity of the group. The number of participants was reached by theoretical saturation. Saturation is achieved by ensuring an adequate sample that provides sufficient data to construct a theory (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018). All participants were given a free and informed consent to participate before the interviews, which took place during November and part of December 2020. The interviews were all recor-

ded for further analysis and interpretation. Using audio and video recordings allows the researcher to see and hear the participants' reports as often as necessary, as well as to transcribe in detail their

speeches and have a firmer support for their analysis (Flick, 2018). In order to safeguard identities and in accordance with the aforementioned Term, participants will not be identified.

**Table 1** | Interviews

Number	Interviewed	Duration	Date	Format
1	Local entrepreneur	41 min.	04/11/2020	Online ZOOM
2	Local entrepreneur	31 min.	09/11/2020	In person
3	Entrepreneur from the region	29 min.	10/11/2020	Online ZOOM
4	Entrepreneur from the region	30 min.	11/11/2020	Online ZOOM
5	Resident	20 min.	12/11/2020	In person
6	Culture Researcher	1h30 min.	14/11/2020	Online ZOOM
7	Local entrepreneur/ Resident	60 min.	30/11/2020	Online ZOOM
8	Local cultural association/Resident	50 min.	13/12/2020	In person

Source: own elaboration

### 3.4 Data collection instrument

Three interview scripts were developed as a tool to understand three distinct perspectives: (i) understand the opinion of entrepreneurs regarding the profitability of their tourism businesses; (ii) understand the opinion of residents regarding the tourism development of the village; (iii) understand the opinion of people with relevant knowledge about the intangible cultural heritage of Podence. Each of the perspectives (economic, social, and cultural) was considered fundamental viewing a holistic vision of the externalities of tourism in the territory. The questions in the scripts are duly grounded in the literature presented. From an economic perspective, the questions reflect the themes: Economic dynamization; Tourism supply sustainable practices; Stakeholder support and action; Future perspectives. From the social perspective: Cultural identity valorisation; Capacity to attract residents; Community revitalization; Sustainable tourism practices in host/tourist contact. From the cultural perspective: Authenticity; Tou-

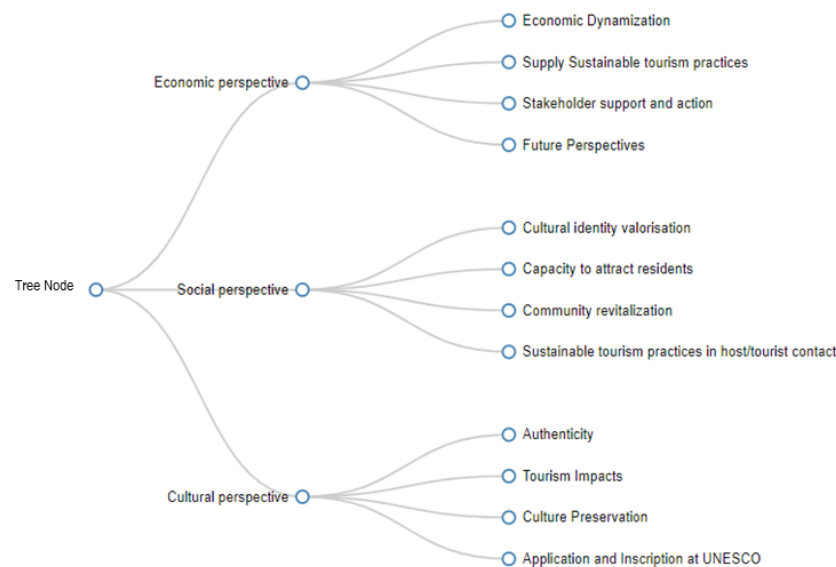
risms impacts; Culture preservation; Application and Inscription at UNESCO.

### 3.5 Interpretation

Interviews were subjected to content analysis, involving the categorisation and systematisation of discourses, to identify the main ideas of each interviewee, as well as to compare patterns of thought and feelings (Laurence, 2011). This analysis was done using the webQDA, a software that handles non-numerical and unstructured data in qualitative analysis. It can be used online and in real time, in an individual and collaborative way. It also has a support service for the research process (Costa et al., 2015).

From the interviews emerged the categories and subcategories presented in Figure 2 that will be explained in the analysis section.

To better understand the content of the interviews, some transcriptions are presented, through which it was possible to draw various conclusions.



**Figure 2 | Tree Node**  
Source: own elaboration from WebQDA

## 4. Analysis and Discussion of Results

### 4.1 Economic Perspective

Considering economic dynamization, the participants opinion is unanimous about the benefits of tourism for the village. Interviewees highlighted the contribution of tourism activity to the stimulation of the local economy, through the income generated in local businesses, with emphasis on restaurants, accommodation, and handicrafts, throughout the year, but with greater impact on the Carnival festivity. At the same time, there is also a fruitful use and marketing of endogenous products, as well as mutual help among local entrepreneurs.

"I also have an agricultural company and I sell some products to tourists... They spend a lot of money in smoked meat, honey, olive oil... We have groups of customers who probably spend more, economically, in products of the land than during their stay"(11). "Tourists come a lot in search of our agricultural pro-

ducts... and the people take advantage of it! For example, we have a friend here who makes liquors of various fruits and we in restaurant help him sell them"(12). "The village of Podence, at the moment has 130 legalised beds, distributed by housing tourism, local accommodation, which brings some dynamics in terms of tourism, being also reflected in economic terms for those in the territory"(18).

Regarding the supply, sustainable tourism practices are faithful to the characteristics of the territory. Many of the activities provided to visitors originate from local resources and identity, evidencing a concern for the responsible use and transformation of these resources into tourism sustainable products. In this sense, the village tourism supply demonstrates the application of sustainability principles.

"Tourists come looking for what is genuine and that is what we try to offer... We have had the same custo-



mers three and four times and they are not from here, but they come on purpose to eat our traditional food (I2). "I know there have been interests in creating larger, private tourist developments from outside, and this has been rejected so far, and hopefully still is..."(I6). "One of the experiences that we really bet from the beginning was to know-how the handicraft... We have an activity where people, for a value, see us make the tin mask and then they give the finishing, paint the mask to their style and take them to their homes, it is one of the experiences where we had more success"(I7).

Concerning stakeholder support and action, it is recognised the commitment of the Association of the Caretos de Podence Group, to promote tourism through cultural heritage, in a balanced and beneficial relationship. In general opinion, more support and investment are needed from the local authorities, so that the village gives a better response, not only to visitors but also to the community.

"The local municipality together with the City Council of Macedo de Cavaleiros, could help more the population to improve development and make other interventions. There is a lot of tourist that arrives here and leaves the village with the feeling that something is missing"(I2). "This promotion speech of municipality is very superficial, this just calling the tourist is not a long-term benefit that changes people's lives... Now we must do something deeper and make the village an example of sustainable development and it is possible, that is fostered."(I6).

Relating to future perspectives, participants are optimistic about the further development of tourist activity in the village, both in terms of increasing and diversifying demand and supply. However, there is a concern about the infrastructures and interventions that need to be undertaken, as well as the unity and commitment of all stakeholders.

"When traditions are spread and maintained with quality, those who come like what they see, we feel it and when the tourist likes to recommend it to others, it passes the word, and this always brings more people, so I think the future will be promising"(I3). "Visitants go away very pleased, I know that every year more people will come, but if they do not create new infrastructures, the Festivity will no longer have quality"(I4). "Podence in the future will be a village with a lot of renown, not only derived from the Caretos, but also everything else that the village provides..., but there it has to be with the union of everyone here in the village and have someone, politically speaking, who is interested"(I5).

#### 4.2. Social perspective

In respect of cultural identity valorisation, the importance of the village's culture and heritage legacy for the psychological wellbeing of the entire community is well known and is its hallmark. The participants indicate that this cultural identity is a source of pride, self-esteem and is reflected in the sense of belonging to the community.

"The village itself has already started to look at tradition in a different way, or for success or business reasons, the people of the village have started to

see Caretos as a good thing for the village and for everyone"(14). "It is a much-loved tradition...and people of course are proud...The people of Podence know the value of the tradition that they have, and the tourism has confirmed this"(17). "This tradition also has a lot to do with this spirit of unity and sense of community that exists in the festivity, first it's a spontaneous festivity, the people join by their own free will and it's them who enjoy and everyone in the village feels this as a little bit of them, it's in their soul!" (18).

With reference to the capacity to attract residents, the village has a very interesting dynamic with emigrants. They are, together with the resident population, the guarantor of the Carnival and therefore have a great importance in living it and maintaining it for the future. They are the hope for the rejuvenation of the community. There is optimism that some emigrants will return to the village and settle there.

"This village has many young people, not inhabitants, but emigrants and they contribute a lot to this tradition, they love it. They may have reasons to return, and I think so that many are already thinking of returning"(12). "I'm very hopeful about this. Over the years, the Association of Caretos has played a very important role, which has fed this commitment, the return of the emigrants every year at Carnival, but now this responsibility is undoubtedly more on their side because they are the descendants... (16). "I believe that this will happen and even more likely to happen now with the recognition from UNESCO. See their

village on that level was a great pride. We in the last carnivals always have between 150 and 200 emigrants who come on purpose for Carnival"(18).

Considering community revitalization, there has been some evolution, both at the architectural and community dynamics levels, which has come together to carry out some interventions. The participants witness some changes in infrastructures and spaces that have been renewed, as well as the investment in innovative projects that will be implemented in the recent future.

"I always remember the expectation of a day having in Podence an intervention that would make the village more rustic, which is also the expectation of those who visit us and has been until recently, a negative point for Podence. There are some houses in stone, renovated, now we are following that line more recently, but of course, it had to be a big intervention"(17). "Now they are doing something very nice which is to paint some houses, with the figure of the Caretos, is beautiful! The village from two years ago has been improved, it is an important thing, before there was nothing allusive and now who arrives knows that is coming to the village of Caretos de Podence. If they continue with these projects, I think the village will look very beautiful"(14).

Regarding sustainable tourism practices in the host/tourist contact, the considerations show that this relationship is usually cordial and of mutual interest. Although in general the relationship is good, there is still on the part of some people (a minority and unrelated to the tourist activity) an

attitude of rejection to visitors and to all tourist demand.

"If they ask for example if there are more paintings up there, the village people are interested in showing what the village has of value and this then leads to asking where the people are from and so when there is opportunity there is this connection. In the village there are many old people who can explain what the tradition of Caretos used to be and make that difference known to people. Many people are interested in knowing the history of the Caretos"(15). "In general, the relationship is frankly positive, people are walking around the village and the inhabitants like to say good morning. . . Even the tourists themselves like to walk through the village and see the people and talk to them. . . There is also a small percentage of people who still have a certain resistance to tourism. . ."(17).

### 4.3 Cultural perspective

Concerning authenticity, in general, the cultural ritual is considered by the participants as genuine and true, but they also consider that, because of the evolution of society, the ritual may have been adapted to the expectations of a modern and contemporary population, without losing its identity and meaning.

"The authenticity of Caretos is very much based on the transmission, from generation to generation, is something very beautiful, that people like when they see a father holding hands with his son in the streets, dressed of Careto. Here in Podence it is possible to

see this transmission live. . . Also lies in the know-how of the craftwork that is associated, the masks, the costumes and what needs to be done to create the Carnival Festivity (17). "This authenticity lies in everything that the village of Podence has managed to maintain over the years. . . Lies in the tradition of the Caretos, which is a differentiated tradition, within the Carnival Festivity, which is authentic, which is spontaneous, it was the people of Podence who throughout these centuries managed to maintain this mark and this matrix"(18).

In respect of tourism impacts, there is a clear advantage in the development of tourism activity, both through heritage enhancement and socioeconomic dynamization. In general, they see tourism as beneficial, but it is perceived that still, some elements of the community, with little emphasis, are against the leverage of tourism.

"If there are no tourists to visit this Festival, the residents and people of the region alone are not enough to maintain the tradition, from this point of view tourism is also important"(18). "Tourism also have a good consequence that is we start to value and develop other things around the cultural heritage. . . without changing the ritual, which is what, sometimes, tourism brings of dangerous. . . It's necessary to make the visitors aware of the place and the kind of people they are dealing with, so that there is a balance here, above the tourist interest"(16). "There is a more progressive part, with the clear intention of making the Caretos de Podence an asset for the village through tourism, and a more conserva-

tive part, which has offered resistance to all these advances, but which today is more diluted. . . "(17).

With reference to culture preservation, there is a great desire to keep alive its immaterial culture that goes through centuries of history. Due to the fragility of the population, there is a concern that the community ritual, as it is experienced today, will gradually be lost. In response, several concrete initiatives and projects have been planned to guarantee the preservation of tradition, with the greatest possible longevity, and for this purpose there is the Safeguarding Plan.

"We have a safeguard plan, which is also based on the thematic space of tradition, the Careto House, which will soon be reformulated, and will have another cultural value, related to the new technologies. Then we have the part of the workshops related to the mask and costume. Then on an inter-generational level, Careto House, are now also making Careto costumes for the Facanitos, i.e. the Careto costumes, but for children, which we did not have"(18). "There's no security in the transmission, I even think that this is one of the things that puts most at risk, despite all this motivation, I'm very afraid that this is all very tem-

porary. . . because the bonds are already fragile throughout the year, and the people who maintain this emotional bond are very old grandparents already..."(16).

About application and inscription at UNESCO, the integration in the Representative List of UNESCO's Intangible Cultural Heritage was already a long-standing ambition of the community. One of the main achievements of the application was the involvement and participation of the Podence community. The participants considered that this recognition brought even more visibility and an increased responsibility to preserve and raise its cultural heritage.

"At the time of Carnival, this year (2020) was an atypical year, due to the appointment of UNESCO in December, from Vila Real upwards, to the North was all full, there were more than 40,000 in all four days of the Festival...and we felt here an endless joy, isn't it?!"(15). "This recognition it's actually a big responsibility that we have here. And this responsibility is to maintain the matrix of the Festivity, as it has been classified... I think that with this recognition this has a very great potential. . . There are all the conditions for the village to develop and take a 180-degree turn"(18).



Figure 3 | Word cloud – most repeated words in total  
Source: own elaboration from WebQDA

## 5. Final Conclusions

The relationship between the literature and the case study is confirmed by several results. Firstly, it is proven that tourism can generate income and economic benefits for rural communities. It is also confirmed that in the rural environment tourism must be developed according to the principles of sustainability. Only then the community, through its identity and its own resources can create wealth, without losing its character and without compromising its balance. The village has proved to be a good example of tourism development in a rural environment, linking the three themes of literature, tourism sustainability, community emancipation and authenticity of cultural heritage. There is also an evidence that tourism contributes to the residents' retention and induces the returns of emigrants, as it represents an alternative source of income, and stimulates the sense of belonging in the territory. Tourism activity can foster diverse transformations in the destinations where it takes place, physical (such as the creation of infrastructure) and psychological (such as place attachment) transformations, leading to community revitalization. Authenticity is also identified as a driver for contemporary tourism demand, relating to the experience of genuine cultural practices and traditions, circumscribed to a particular place. The relationship between tourism and culture is cooperative, generating mutual benefits whereas culture,

for its appreciation and preservation, improves tourism demand. The village of Podence, because of a strategic vision of local development, based on the controlled exploitation of its resources, is currently an example of tourism sustainability in rural areas. Although it is not a tourism destination with great infrastructure, variety of services and complementarity of supply, it is a territory that possesses numerous potentialities, capable of generating and maintaining a dynamic demand and supply, tending to be less seasonal. There are several factors, tangible, and intangible, that have converged to promote tourism in Podence, namely, cultural richness, natural resources, and landscapes of great value. Furthermore, the creation of local businesses, such as accommodations and restaurants and the implementation of a promotion strategy focused on the authenticity of territory, made it possible to attract a segment of tourists who are interested and contribute for tourism sustainability. Considering the Economic dimension, the participants made more references to the contribution of tourism to the local economic dynamization. Within the Social dimension, the enhancement of cultural identity was the most cited, while in the Cultural dimension, the preservation of culture was the most referenced. In quantitative terms, the consideration of the three perspectives does not present much oscillation, considering the number of references made by the participants. The economic perspective was referred 39 times, the social pers-

pective 40 and the cultural perspective 50. Therefore, it is noted that the cultural dimension of sustainability is the most cited, which may be related to a greater participants' appreciation of this dimension.

### 5.1 Theoretical implications

From the literature presented, it is understood that sustainable tourism fits perfectly with rural territories and their communities. Considering the fragility of these areas and all their social, economic, cultural, and natural characteristics, among others, it is necessary that the impacts caused by tourism are mostly perceived by the community as positive and beneficial, with significance for their development and emancipation. Therefore, the tourist activity, especially in rural territories, must aim at improving the quality of life of the residents.

### 5.2 Practical implications and recommendations

This study brings to policy makers, economic actors and all stakeholders interested in the tourism development of Podence, data that allow the analysis of information related to economic, social, and cultural impacts. For a better tourism governance, should be considered simultaneously: tourism sustainability, community emancipation and cultural authenticity. Balancing these dimensions will determine sustainable tourism development and successful local development.

Tourism investment and valorisation strategy - Local authorities with tourism responsibilities should encourage the community, in supporting tourism activities, initiatives and projects empowering the territory with variety and quality in its offer. Reiterating the contribution of tourism to the economic and social dynamism of the territory, projecting it as an attraction.

Sustainable tourism management, with community involvement - Assess and monitor the negative impacts that residents may feel because of tourism, it is essential to have a commitment to mitigate these impacts. It is necessary to raise awareness of the effects of tourism, for visitors and residents, as well as to make them both aware of the identity and cultural of the destination.

Offering experiences integrated into local identity - Tourist offer must be sensitive to the identity of the territory. It is necessary coordinate the tourist agents to offer personalized experiences impregnated with authenticity. Also valuing and boosting local resources and products. These offers integrated in the territorial identity, aim to meet the visitor's expectations and to have an offer with sustainable characteristics.

Reduction of seasonality, demand, and supply - A greater number of activities and experiences should be ensured, enriching the supply throughout the year. The region has differentiated attractions, namely in natural heritage, which should be dynamized to add value to the experience of those who visit Podence.

Creating partnerships and strengthening networking - Collaboration must go from the local level, where union and mutual aid are already taking place, to the regional level, ensuring, in a wider territory, greater responsiveness and complementarity of supply. In an aggregate logic, the tourist agents of the region must build relationships based on cooperation.

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