



Gastronomy as a motivation for travel: A study of gastronomic tourism in the city of João Pessoa-PB

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ABSTRACT: Since the Italian Renaissance, and with the other tourism segments, culture continues to be one main motivations for travel. Gastronomic tourism, as a facet of cultural tourism that brings authenticity and experience, is a niche that has emerged as a motivation in the choice of destination by the new tourist profiles. Given that João Pessoa is a tourist city, the aim of this work was to identify whether gastronomic tourism plays an important role in attracting tourists to the city. Bibliographic and documentary research was carried out, using a quantitative approach for the data analysis. As a data collection instrument, a survey was used, interviewing sixty-six tourists in person, in September 2019. The results show that the highest percentage of tourists interviewed is 60 years of age or older, and is motivated by leisure travel. As regards the interest related to experience/gastronomic tourism, it was found that this is not a motivation for visiting the destination João Pessoa; however, there is a desire to try the local gastronomy. In this context, there is a need for managers of enterprises, and those responsible for publicizing João Pessoa, to focus on associating the gastronomic potential as a strategy for attracting potential tourists to the destination.

Keywords: Motivation for travel;
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INTRODUCTION

Tourism is a set of processes, especially economic ones, related to the arrival, stay and departure of travelers within and outside a country, state or region, contributing to one of the most globalized sectors of the world's economy (Panosso Netto, 2010). Beni (2004) states that "globalization is one of the main factors for bringing greater change in tourism demand, as it brings a redistribution of wealth, products and services from the most developed regions to the least economically endowed", manifesting in the diversifications of tourism that have emerged throughout history.

According to Beni (2004), in the last century, sociological studies in the area of tourism were mainly focused on mass tourism, but with the passage from the 20th century to the 21st century, there was a development of tourism worldwide, demanding greater diversification of the market to meet the new demands arising from mass tourism. These changes promoted tourism, new markets, new forms of tourism, and tools for managing and planning the tourism sector.

For Palomeque (1999), tourism is a diverse phenomenon and a complex structure; some tourists might take advantage of the local culture when traveling, while for others, culture is the very motivation to travel (Isaac, 2008). Thus, we see that tourism can provoke different motivations in each individual. Another aspect in the motivation to choose a destination is gastronomic tourism which, according to Gandara, Gimenes & Mascarenhas, (2009), is "a part of cultural tourism in which the displacement of visitors takes place for reasons linked to the gastronomic practices of a given locality". Based on this theory, it is reaffirmed that this niche market attracts the traveler to experience the local food culture, through sensations and experiences. This is because each region has its own particularities when it comes to its gastronomy, generating differentiated products that attract people (Dias, 2005).

There are different ways to link tourism and gastronomy, such as specialized establishments, tourist routes and itineraries with gastronomic appeal, or festivals and events where gastronomy is one of the main focuses, enabling an attractive and sensory experience with the cultural symbolism of gastronomy (Gimenes, 2010).

Gastronomic tourism, increasingly present in destinations, provides unique experiences for diners. Discovering the local cuisine, experiencing native routines of each region, through traditional dishes, and also the use of specific utensils, characterize the history of a people as experienced by travelers. This segment, which is increasingly sought by tourists, has helped

strengthen connections between people, as well as boosting the local economy.

The cuisine of the city of João Pessoa, located in north-eastern Brazil, known as the most eastern point of the Americas and the city where the sun rises first, is a fusion of European, African and Indigenous influences, with typical dishes of the hinterland, such as dried meat, and products of the land such as rice, beans, and manioc, which harmonize and turn into a true richness of flavor. On the coast, delicacies based on fish and seafood are prevalent; these are served in containers often made by craftsmen and women of the region, a tradition that is increasingly valued by the tourist.

This work, therefore, aims to identify the role of gastronomic tourism in attracting tourists to the city of João Pessoa. This research is justified by the fact that gastronomic tourism has been on the increase among potential tourists seeking new gastronomic experiences associated with culture and leisure. The state of Paraíba, and in particular, its capital João Pessoa, presents authentic gastronomy from the Brazilian north-east, which can be a strategy for attracting tourists and disseminating the destination.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Cultural Tourism

With the segmentation of tourism and the search to satisfy a wide range of publics, several market segments have emerged, among them, cultural tourism. This tourism segment aims to deepen and involve the memory of the tourist in the local culture and customs of a given city, state or country.

Beeho & Prentice (1997) discuss the intangibility of the experience that tourism can provide, i.e. something that cannot be measured, because the experience depends on each individual, their experience of the world, and their conceptions, feelings and culture. Thus, tourism activity and its attractions can be interpreted in several ways by a single individual, demonstrating that experience is not standardized, but is shaped to the needs of the individual. Coutinho & Faria (2017) affirm that tourism activity revolves around intangible products and services, and that its consumption is based on the expectation of new experiences.

Tourism today, with its new model of social identity (Urry, 1990) has meant that conventional mass tourism¹ is no longer about simply enjoying leisure and family holidays, but is motivated by other feelings, such as the desire to get to know new cultures, peoples, monuments and museums, in the search to create new identities (URRY, 1990), associating tourism with culture.

¹ Tourism in tourist destinations that become well-known and receive large numbers of tourists (BUTLER, 1980)



Based on the premise that cultural tourism is on the increase (Swarbrooke, 1997) as one of the main segments of global tourism (Pérez, 2009), investment in the development of tourism products related to culture, such as museums, theaters, and more elaborate cultural centers with modern design, has also become important in tourist destinations, in the search for diversification. Richards (2000) adds that this situation resembles an "arms race" in which tourist destinations seek to invest in better cultural infrastructure than their neighbors and competitors, with the aim of attracting and winning potential tourists (Oye, Okafor & Kinjir, 2013).

Panosso Neto (2010), indicates the importance of conserving and extending planning actions for experience and culture tourism. Likewise, Vieira & Souza (2016) state that "the search for an alienated, media-driven tourism, and the search for alternative options in which a person can experience nature in its essence, is the path in the search for a new travel paradigm, or a return to the sense of travel that has been lost."

As consequence, cultural tourism is understood by Smith (2007) as a conceptual umbrella, that is, it is assumed that it addresses other forms of tourism. This diversity is a consequence of the need to meet tourists' desires and expectations. Cultural tourism creates new products so that the tourist can have options. Thus, cultural tourism is no longer only for intercultural education (Pérez, 2009), but offers other opportunities.

In order to attract these new tourists, cultural tourism has shaped itself for the production of cultural, heritage and artistic goods, i.e., for the development of diverse cultural attractions, thereby increasing the flow of tourists who wish to visit these attractions (Richards, 2000) and expanding the concept of culture, the consumption of culture, and the need for a market segmentation. In some cases, it creates market niches to meet the new demands and integrate the tourism products of the past with the contemporary. Following the concept of umbrella for cultural tourism mentioned by Smith (2007), the expansion of this type of tourism is due to the new market niches. The more diversified the market becomes, the greater the need for differentiation between them. Thus, as a modality of cultural tourism, gastronomic tourism is understood as visiting destinations for the purpose of finding out more about the local cuisine and experiencing native routines of each region, through food.

Gastronomy as a cultural heritage

For Gandara, Gimenes & Mascarenhas (2009), food can relate to cultural identity involving space and territory in a single concept. According to Franzoni (2016), "Food is a socially constructed element, as it is precisely within society that it acquires value." Both authors foster the concept of gastronomy as a cultural and

symbolic richness of a particular place.

Similarly, Schluter (2003) states that immaterial heritage can be experienced, appreciated and shared with tourists, enabling a meal to be characterized as a symbolic consumption of a locality, functioning as a powerful means of social and cultural communication.

"Thus, the gastronomy of a place becomes a way to increase the tourist offer, and a product added to cultural tourism, become much more than a simple culinary art, but as an important vehicle of popular culture, showing how the inhabitants of each region lived at a certain time (Antonini, 2004 apud Barroco; Baroque, 2008)."

Thus, gastronomy is a cultural element that is framed as a legacy of a region, and this legacy becomes as a tool for attracting tourists, directly impacting the results of the development of a city, state or country. Going beyond the idea of food as merely a physiological need, it is also possible to think of food as a form of cultural expression, with gastronomy acting as a tourist motivator that can be aligned in various ways, through gastronomic itineraries, e.g. visits to cachaça (sugar cane brandy) distilleries and wineries, or even the simple experience of eating a typical local dish, but always as a positive tool for attracting people to the destination.

The evolution of gastronomy is associated with human development. The search for food, brings, in its essence, the use of various elements of nature that have been transforming the kitchen and history of a people. Gastronomic tourism is strengthened with the growing demand of people interested in discovering the cuisine and culture of different localities.

Gastronomic tourism

Tourism activity has gathered strength and prominence in the global economy in recent years, becoming an important economic activity for generating foreign income and creating direct and indirect jobs, and an important tool for the development of a locality.

However, tourism is not a contemporary activity. Throughout history, people have traveled for various reasons, such as wars, the search for health cures, the quest for academic knowledge, or religious pilgrimages, among others. What we know today as tourism is the result of transformations of society over the years. For Gonçalves and Campos (1998), tourism, related to trips made for leisure purposes, i.e., the use of the free time that we have left, after meeting the needs of life and work obligations, is a relatively recent phenomenon.

According to Beni (2004, p. 53): Tourism is eminently a social phenomenon that, by giving rise to a series of activities, such as transport, accommodation, recreation, food and others, causes these activities to generate another series of effects on the environment in

which they are developed, whether economic, social, cultural, or even ecological in nature.

Faced with the increase in tourism demand in recent times, tourist destinations have seen the opportunity to increase their investments in order to better serve those who are traveling, whether in search of culture, business, adventure, gastronomy, or leisure, among other motivations. Such investments can be seen, for example, in the infrastructure and diversification of gastronomic establishments, particularly in destinations that have fostered tourism activity as their main economic activity, boosting the gastronomic tourism segment.

Thus, gastronomic tourism can be understood as a part of cultural tourism in which potential tourists are motivated by factors linked to the gastronomic practices of a destination. For Mascarenhas & Gandara (2010, p. 779) gastronomic tourism is understood as “a form of cultural tourism that enables the visitor to learn more about the habits and lifestyle of the community visited, through its gastronomic performances”. Thus, gastronomic tourism can be operationalized through:

- Trips to try local street food;
- Sampling local dishes and drinks;
- Taking tours on regional product routes (e.g., winery or coffee routes);
- Eating at traditional restaurants;
- Sharing meals with local people;
- Attending gastronomic events and festivals;
- Visiting local fairs and markets;
- Learning about the production of a particular food, through visits to farms and local producers;
- Attending cookery classes;
- Visiting exhibitions that explain the history of local cuisine;
- Taking part in gastronomic expeditions with chefs and experts.

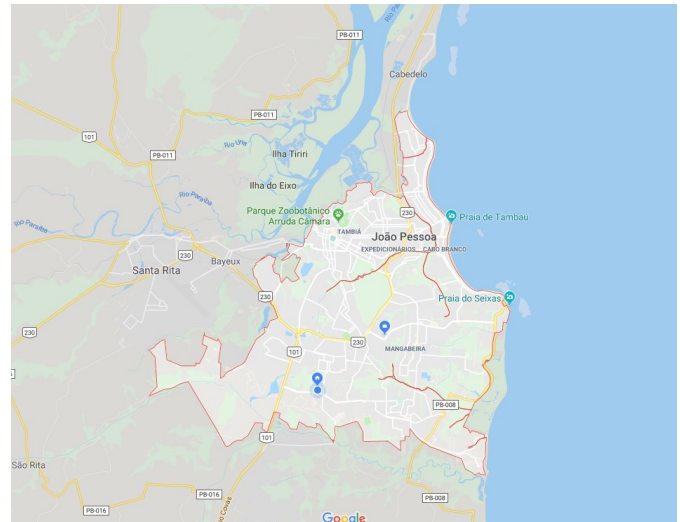
Thus, gastronomic tourism provides benefits to the community, as it adds value to and publicizes the local gastronomy, preserves the local culture, generates inclusion, enables better distribution of income, and gives a sense of pride to the local community and to travelers who have the opportunity to experience new authentic and memorable experiences through gastronomy. It also provides an exchange of learning, with social impacts and sustainable development.

CHARACTERIZATION OF THE STUDY AREA

Founded on August 5, 1585 and born on the banks of the Sanhaua River, João Pessoa (figure 1) is in the privi-

leged position of the most easterly point of the Americas, and is the third oldest capital in Brazil. These and other factors, such as the city's history, its rich Baroque architecture, and the fact that it is bathed by the Atlantic Ocean, provide it with a cultural variety that directly impacts on the cuisine (SILVA, 2021).

Figure 1: Map of João Pessoa



Source: Google, 2022.

Nowadays, João Pessoa has a diversity of bars and restaurants that serve its consumers, whether tourists, visitors, or local inhabitants. In the city, the public can find local cuisine, rich in preparations such as sun-dried meat, manioc, seafood and other dishes, with restaurants ranging from popular style to fine dining, as well as international cuisine.

Tourism to the capital of Paraíba is motivated by several factors, such as the characteristics of the place, the climate, and the welcoming people. Tourists have access to a wide range of options for eating and drinking, such as bars, pubs, snack bars, and restaurants that offer their clientele traditional gastronomy, full of identity and affective memories. (Barbosa, 2021).

The city of João Pessoa has more than one thousand six hundred restaurant establishments registered with the city hall, including eighteen units on the waterfront, according to data from SEHA JP (union of accommodation and catering establishments of João Pessoa). But this number is not sufficient to meet the tourism needs (Agostinho, 2020). The specificities of the regions of Paraíba, through the gastronomy of Brejo, Cariri, Litoral, Curimataú and Sertão, are present in the cuisine of the pessoense (as the people of João Pessoa are known), contributing to a multiple composition of a cuisine full of personality, and available to the tourist (Santiago et al 2020).

In fact, in recent years, João Pessoa has shown a growth in the number of gastronomic establishments, with a focus on local cuisine, bringing not only typical presentations of the region, but also with a more con-



temporary touch to suit all publics.

The scenario outlined above is important for analyzing the territory studied, as the city has cultural characteristics that are very close to the neighboring cities and states, making this an objection to be addressed in the data analysis.

METHODOLOGY

This research is characterized descriptive, with bibliographic and documentary research. A quantitative approach was used for the data analysis. As a data collection instrument, a questionnaire was used, which was applied to the tourists in person, bearing in mind that the research was carried out in September 2019, before the start of the Covid-19 pandemic.

First, bibliographic research was carried out based on a literature review of works published in national and international journals. Based on the research problem, the main descriptors were drawn: Gastronomy, tourism and gastronomic tourism. For the database, CAPES (Coordination for Improvement of Higher Education Personnel) was selected because it is a reliable database, used by educational institutions. Google Scholar and Books were also used.

For the descriptive research, which is a description of the characteristics of a phenomenon, presenting as much detail as possible about it (NEUMAN, 1997), the main findings of the literature search and the empirical case of the research were presented, seeking to understand how they are related.

Field research, with the objective of investigating the influence of gastronomy as a channeler of potential tourists, was carried out through the application of a survey (Leeuw, Hox & Dillman, 2008), this being the data collection instrument used. The structured questionnaire was applied in person, to tourists on one of the busiest beaches of João Pessoa; Tambau beach. Before applying the survey, a pilot study was carried out with five people, in order to see if there were any unsuitable questions and correct and validate the data collection instrument where necessary.

An active search was also carried out on the website of the Brazilian Association of Bars and Restaurants of Paraíba - ABRASEL/PB, to analyze the menus that highlight the local gastronomy of the associated establishments. It was found that there are a total of one hundred and forty-nine member establishments, which were accessed through their websites, or through the Google and TripAdvisor platforms.

For the analysis of these menus, thirty ABRASEL/PB member establishments were selected, based on their offer of traditional dishes and their appeal to the local gastronomy. For the survey, a questionnaire was created with six closed questions on the theme of gastronomic tourism, as well as questions that aimed to de-

termine the profile of the sample and identify whether gastronomy is an attraction of the destination of João Pessoa.

People aged eighteen years or over were asked to take part in the survey by answering the questionnaire. A total of sixty-six subjects were interviewed. After the data collection, the data were tabulated and organized in an excel spreadsheet, obtaining the percentages presented in the results.

RESULTS/DATA ANALYSIS

The first analysis was carried out on website of the ABRASEL/PB, noting that there are a total of one hundred and forty-nine member establishments; however, only thirty of these were analyzed in greater depth, based on the offer of local dishes presented in their menus.

According to Valsassina (2013), entrepreneurs and entrepreneurs in the area of tourism have identified the valuable association of destinations with their gastronomy, and have begun to invest in hotel and restaurant projects that highlight the traditions and gastronomic culture of the places. But this practice was not particularly visible when analyzing the websites and menus of the restaurant establishments affiliated with the ABRASEL-PB. In this analysis, traditional, or typical dishes of the region were considered, as well as regional ingredients in contemporary preparations that represented the Northeastern gastronomy, more specifically, the gastronomy of João Pessoa. Among the typical dishes analyzed in the menus, those that appeared the most were rubacão (made with made with beans, rice, sun-dried meat and rennet cheese), fish, couscous, dried meat paçoca, goat buchada, shrimp and crab.

For Campos et al (2017) eating habits in the northeast region are determined by several factors, one of which is the fact that all its states are bathed by the sea, stimulating the consumption of seafood in the coastal region. In the northeastern interior, on the other hand, goat and beef are traditionally eaten, the latter often in the form of sun-dried or dried meat, which are differentiated by their salt content, emphasizing the preparations found in this research.

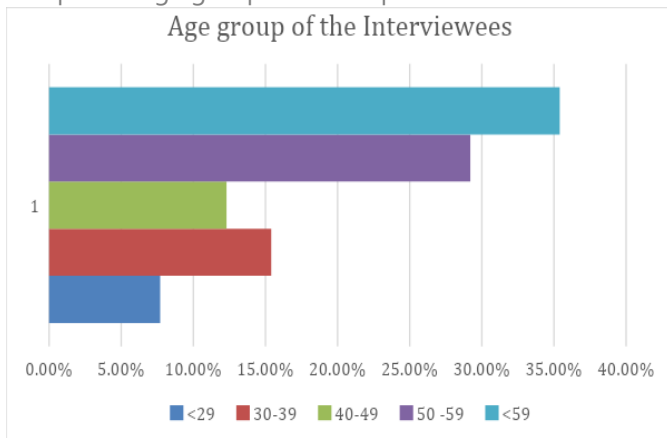
Profile of the respondents

The survey was applied to sixty-six tourists, and all sixty-six questionnaires were counted. In the data analysis of the respondents' profile, the first point to be observed was the age group of the tourists, categorizing the tourists by age, into the following five groups: 18 to 29 years, 30 to 39 years, 40 to 49, 50 to 59 years, and 60 years or older. The results indicated that the highest number of respondents were in the 60 years or

older age range (Chart 1), with 35.4% of the respondents falling into this category.

This result corroborates the study carried out by Martins et al (2016) which indicates that the elderly have been the predominant age group in leisure activities, such as tourism, due to the increase in life expectancy of Brazilians, leading to a decrease in the seasonality of tourist destinations. This fact is directly related to the month in which this survey was carried out, as September is considered a period with low tourism demand in the city of João Pessoa.

Graph 01. Age group of the respondents.



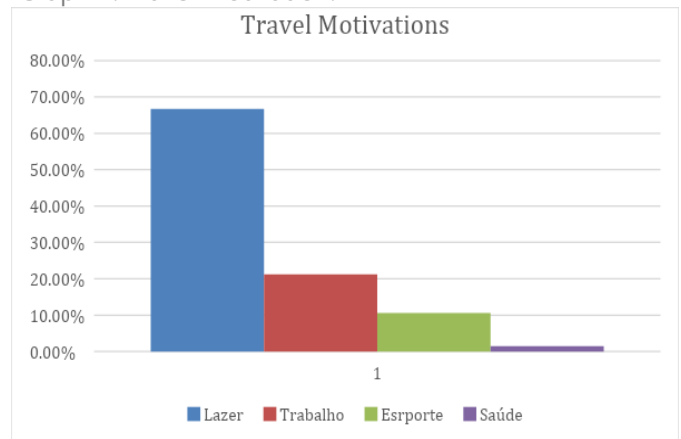
Source: Prepared by the authors, 2020.

In relation to the sex of the tourists interviewed, there were 58.5% female and 41.5% male respondents. Their nationalities were also identified, with 7.7% foreigners and 92.3 Brazilians. For Martins et al, (2016) the tourist is endowed with his own desires and is free in his wishes, therefore it is necessary to offer what they are looking for, regardless of age profile, sex or nationality, it is necessary to achieve a high degree of satisfaction of this tourist in relation to their expectations, generating a motivation to return that tourist destination.

Motivation to travel

The questionnaire addressed six points aimed at determining the real motivation in choosing the destination of João Pessoa, for the tourists that made up the sample. The first question was about the initial motivation for his trip, with the following results: 66.7% stated leisure as their motivation, 21.2% work, 10.6% sport and 1.5% health. This corroborates the contributions of Ayla (2007), who states that travel motivations can be diverse, ranging from leisure and recreation to work, business, health and religion. However, in all of these, finding out more about the local customs and realities of the placed visited, and the desire to experience the different cultural manifestations, is a complementary goal in all the trips. See graph 2.

Graph 2. Travel motivation.



Source: Prepared by the authors, 2020.

The second question was about the motivation to choose a destination directly related to gastronomy. Of the respondents, 12.1% said yes, they would have gastronomy as motivation when choosing a destination, while 87.9% said that gastronomy would not be a motivation for the trip.

According to Lemos (2001), there are different variables directly related to the choice of a tourist destination, such as value versus utility, affordability, the amount of time available, the prices of the services and attractions of the place, rates such as exchange rates that define external destinations, distance versus travel time, among others. It remains to investigate how tourism motivation related to gastronomic tourism fits in.

For Manfugas et al 2019, tourism is one of the most significant phenomena of recent times, providing a cultural exchange, an experience of new localities and knowledge of the different elements among destinations, with experience tourism becoming one of the new aspects in the motivation to choose certain destinations. Gastronomic tourism can also be considered as related to experience tourism, since gastronomy provides new experiences for the tourist. This experience can be related to the local gastronomy, with traditional dishes, sensations through new ingredients, well-prepared dishes presenting the techniques and knowledge of Nouvelle Cuisine, or even traditional local presentations emphasizing the culture. Finally, gastronomy goes beyond mere food; it is a social act that brings people together.

The interviewees were also asked whether, even if their main motivation was not to discover the local gastronomy, they usually tried out the local cuisine at the destination visited. As a result, 87.9% responded that even if gastronomy was not the motivation for their trip, they tried to sample the gastronomy offered by the destination, while 12.1% responded that did not generally try the local gastronomy during their trips.

The significance that gastronomy has for tourism, as an important factor in the travel motivation, is directly related to the development of gastronomic tourism,



which is defined by Montecinos (2014) as the “flow of people who, while traveling, make an itinerary of activities based on cultural and gastronomic heritage, both material and immaterial, in places different from their usual surroundings, for a period of consecutive time of less than one year, as the main objective of consuming and enjoying products and services and gastronomic experiences in a priority way”.

The fourth question sought to understand whether the tourists considered it important to try the regional cuisine during their travels. For this question the same percentages were obtained as for the previous question, i.e., 87.9% said yes, it is important to try the regional cuisine of the visited destination and 12.1% said it was not important to try the gastronomy/cuisine of the places they visited. It is understood, therefore, that tourists who are interested in trying the local gastronomy, even though this is not the main motivation for the trip, value the importance of the local gastronomy, its flavors and presentations.

For the fifth question, the interviewees were asked about the determining factor when choosing a restaurant. Thus, 34.9% of responses said the offer of traditional local dishes; 25.4% said the prestige of the restaurant; 17.5% said that their main criterion when choosing would be the price; 15.9% indicated the location, and 6.3% referred to experiences or indications as their main criteria. It was seen that in this research, the experience is presented as a point of lesser interest. However, the prestige of the restaurant is presented as the second most valued indicator, which may be associated with the search for quality of the food and services provided. Although tourists did not choose the destination João Pessoa as a gastronomic destination, when it came to eating, they looked for establishments that offered traditional dishes on their menus; this emphasizes the need to improve the strategies of menu planning and marketing.

Finally, the interviewees were asked to evaluate the gastronomy of Paraíba; 60.3% rated it as very good, 38.1% as good and 1.6% as poor, revealing, in general, that although the initial motivation for the trip may not have been gastronomy, there is an intrinsic curiosity in finding out a little about the gastronomy of the place visited.

Thus, the tourist motivation associated with gastronomy is defined as the search for authenticity that is a characteristic of what is genuine, original, unchanged or spoken as true. In the context of tourism, this authenticity is directly related to a type of motivation that seeks genuine and authentic cultural experiences (DAYS, 2009). Thus, gastronomy has emerged as a motivation, but in this study, we detect that in João Pessoa, this is still not generally a motivation. This area requires greater efforts to win this new audience that is seeking authentic experiences.

According to the literature, an efficient strategy for de-

veloping an effective gastronomic planning system for tourism should have, as conditioning factors, a sustainable local system of production and distribution, consumption and commercialization of food. This system should also focus on product viability; regional dishes; production capacity; short distribution chains; cooperatives and fair trade; legal aspects; sector involvement; composting; sales and marketing; and surplus sales at state and national levels” (Montecinos, 2012).

FINAL REMARKS

This research set out to identify the role of gastronomic tourism in attracting tourists to the city of João Pessoa. For this, we used bibliographic and documentary research, with a quantitative approach, using a questionnaire as the data collection instrument. The structured questionnaire was directed at tourists.

The research found that gastronomy as a travel motivation has emerged in the tourist scenario as a part of experience tourism, but for the destination of João Pessoa/PB, no tools have yet been used to guide this motivation among the external public. The gastronomic wealth of the state is well-known, but on the websites of the restaurants surveyed, this motivation is still little explored as a strategy for publicizing the establishments.

The profile of tourists who composed the sample shows that people 60 or over constitute a considerable portion of tourists seeking the destination João Pessoa, motivated mainly by leisure. Gastronomy was not mentioned as a motivation for choosing the destination, although tourists tend to try the local gastronomy while they are there.

The destination João Pessoa can be explored by the motivation of experience tourism, as there is a rich gastronomy to be enjoyed, which can be configured as another possibility to be explored. In this context, it is seen that there is a need for greater attention, on the part of the managers of the enterprises associated with hospitality, to publicize the gastronomic potential of the place more, as a tool for strengthening the choice of destination and the tourist flow in the destination João Pessoa.

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