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(Organizadoras)



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THE SYMBIOSIS OF MADEIRAN RURAL TRADITIONS AND WELLNESS EXPERIENCES IN NATURE: A CONTRIBUTION TO THE SUSTAINABILITY OF TOURISM DESTINATION.

[Topics 2, 7, 8]

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ABSTRACT

Rural traditions in the natural environment are crucial for the identity and sustainability of tourism destinations. This study aims to promote the symbiosis of local traditions of the senior population of Madeira with wellness and experiential tourism in nature. It is exploratory qualitative research that makes comprehensive use of the literature about Madeiran levadas (irrigation channels), and traditions with the method of thematic content analysis. Furthermore, this paper includes proposals for the interconnection of tourist activities with the rurality of the senior population. It is particularly possible by means of levada walking, agricultural tasks in traditional terraces (poios), knowing about running water mills, and the use of wool for traditional Madeiran ear caps. The sharing of the senior population's farming experiences with tourists serves to enhance and transform their quality of life, affirming their local identity and authenticity. Thus, it contributes to the conservation of ancient agricultural sustainable practices which are important for the future of the local population and tourist activities in Madeira. In conclusion, the preservation of agricultural and traditional activities by the senior population in concert with wellness and experiential tourism in nature opens new sustainable touristic opportunities with benefits for residents and visitors..

KEYWORDS

Cultural Identity; Rural Traditions; Senior Population; Nature; Wellness; Experiential Tourism.

1. INTRODUCTION

Cultural identity is important for the authenticity of touristic destinations. Connecting the rural traditions of the senior population with nature tourism, wellness and experiential tourism is fundamental for the sustainability of tourist activities on the island of Madeira. It is a way to maintain the sustainable practices of the local population in agriculture and creating new sustainable touristic opportunities. It can avoid mass tourist movement to the same places. This can happen via interesting new activities, such as participation in the plantation and irrigation from levadas of the agricultural land in terraces, in cattle raising and grazing cattle in the mountains, in local handicrafts, and in the preparation of traditional enogastronomy.

At the same time, the senior population of the different localities can transmit and share their ancient knowledge through life narratives to the visitors interested in rural traditions as a storytelling activity. For example, they can teach how homemade bread is made and cooked in a traditional wood-fired stone oven in private houses, and how bolo do caco is made on a wood-fired cooking stone. Then, tourists can visit the place where these stones are prepared, for example in Caniçal. These kinds of activities show the connections between rural traditions and nature, promoting quality of life, sustainability, wellness, and experiential tourism. Therefore, the objectives of this paper are: to propose the symbiosis of the traditional activities of the senior population of Madeira with tourist products/services, which are characterized by authentic experiences in local communities; to highlight the experiences of physical activity and well-being in nature with levada walks, including participation in rural activities, such as handicrafts and plantation or irrigation of cultivated land; and to value and transform the quality of life of the rural population, preserving the heritage of these communities and creating unique, memorable and meaningful experiences for visitors. To this end, it is necessary to suggest a quality and diversified tourist offer in Madeiran rural areas through the creation and provision of new tourist products and services, with the aim of increasing authentic and meaningful experiences. In the future, the proposals we will present can be structured offers with farming communities and local agents (public and private) cooperating towards a common objective of valuing rural areas and senior populations.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Tourists value the quality of life near nature in rural areas as a meaningful and healthy experience. Wellness and experiential tourism have been relevant for nature tourism destinations, especially when they are unique and characterized by authentic activities. This is more frequent with senior tourism, as they are more

aware of nature, well-being, and an active lifestyle (Garcês, Pocinho & Jesus, 2018). Complementary traditional and agricultural activities represent an opportunity for active and cultural tourism and the preservation of local heritage (Duxbury, 2021). The symbiosis of local traditions with tourism has an educational and cultural purpose, to which can be added the physical exercise of active tourism in nature. The intention is thus to contribute to the improvement of the mental and spiritual state of the participants (Wolsko, Lindberg, & Reese, 2019), and, at the same time, to the preservation of local sociocultural activities and regional identity, with benefits for both groups, residents, and visitors (Perna, Custódio, & Oliveira, 2019; Pocinho, Garcês & Jesus, 2021). Tourists, especially seniors, increasingly want to experience genuine activities, inserted in their sociocultural context, which enable direct contact with local communities. It is about participating in authentic activities with a connection to the local population and the place through genuine experiences. These are enriching, meaningful, and transforming experiences of a rural nature, which allow participants to learn about the history and cultural heritage of the locality and tourist destination.

Active tourism in nature and experiential tourism are more and more important for tourists' well-being, mainly when they are part of the senior population. For this purpose, tourism in rural areas with their local cultures and identities, including slow and creative tourism, is essential as they are places which can be visited and enjoyed together with the resident communities (Perna, Custódio & Oliveira, 2019; Duxbury et al., 2021; Veijola et al., 2014). This means that it is fundamental to promote interaction and the symbiosis of traditional practices and the sharing of local elders' knowledge with visitors. These visitors are looking for educational activities as part of the local culture and a connection to the place in nature, guaranteeing wellness and fulfilment. As Pavione and Pezzetti (2016) write, the so-called "slow territories" with little-known contexts present a significant set of both and intangible resources, often characterized by levels of excellence and have a strong territorial identity based on cultural and landscape heritage, inseparable from local history and traditions. The authors show that "slow" territories, by combining local traditions with culture and society, represent not only a model of local development but also a growth trajectory that combines economic growth, social cohesion, and environmental protection. They highlight the growth of a substantial segment of tourists who are more aware and attentive to experiential dimensions of the holiday.

So, the identity of the tourist destination is essential when the visitor slows down and enjoys the natural and human landscape of the place, including involvement with the local population, with a view to personal fulfilment or self-fulfillment (involvement of the senses, tasting the local enogastronomy, etc.) (Garcês, Pocinho & Jesus, 2020). This tourism mainly favors stays in rural areas, participating in real and meaningful experiences with genuine people and places, where tourists can be part of the community; the relationship can thus be deeper than a mere commercial relationship (Duxbury, 2021; Guiver & McGrath, 2016). These tourists favor local culture, including the region's enogastronomy, in which tasting and well-being are also associated with the concept of mindfulness. Silva and Umbelino (2017) show how tourism has contributed to rural development and breaks the isolation between the countryside and the city. Therefore, there is an

increase of tourism in rural areas, an activity that is synonymous with sharing and with socially responsible, sustainable development. Rural spaces have natural, scenic, socio-historical, and cultural resources. For example, in the case of the island of Madeira, levadas are a natural, cultural heritage with great ecological value and attraction for visitors (Quintal, 2013; Santos & Correia, 2017). Thus, rural spaces become welcoming communities, allowing appreciation, a sense of identity and belonging, cohesion and reanimation of the localities. In this sense, tourism plays an important role in the preservation of cultural heritage and environmental protection, contributing to the sustainability of local products, community, and the consequent enhancement of the socio-economic, cultural, and natural resources of the tourist destination. Tourists value the exchange of experiences with locals. An example is Portuguese enogastronomic heritage (Silva & Umbelino, 2017), which emerges as an excellent tourist product to boost rural spaces, as it has a much-appreciated rustic nature and is essential for creating jobs for young people and establishing the local population via the development of the territory. However, it is necessary to revitalize the agricultural, sociocultural, and environmental sectors because cultural tourism seeks to humanize heritage through contact with residents and identification with the place. In Silva and Umbelino (2017), the need to maximize the economic benefits of tourism for local communities and their participation in decision-making and tourist activities is argued. In this way, the aim is to enhance the value of products and services that aim to respect the tangible and intangible cultural heritage of the destination and to opt for products produced in the destination, with local raw materials and labor, promoting measures of social and environmental responsibility. Tourists are focused on the search for diversity and quality of experiences in nature, which they want to be remarkable and transformative (Huijbens & Jóhannesson, 2019; Soares & Nunes, 2020).

Forest and valley landscapes are a fundamental component of the natural, historical, and cultural heritage, as an essential element of local and regional identity, preserving the testimony of past times and the identity of the place (Silva & Umbelino, 2017; UNESCO, 1999). That said, important actions to consider are pointed out, like integrating the community in the planning process, clearly defining the activities to be carried out in different places and times of the year, and supporting the transmission of information about the place, promoting interaction with the locals, and integrating tourists into nature and culture, among other important measures. For example, rural, cultural, and natural heritage guarantee authentic and significant local experiences among the senior population, participating in agricultural activities or in traditional handicrafts. Participating in real physical activities together with a meaningful and practical connection to place and local community, visitors leave virtual networks and the pressure of work and feel free from anxiety. So, the tourist experience in the natural environment combines hedonic, altruistic, and meaningful experiences which contribute to well-being and health (Smith & Diekmann, 2017). Active tourists seek to participate in activities in which they want to be an integral part of the experience; they want to be actively involved and to discover and learn something while having fun. Therefore, much of the value offered to tourists and which forms part of the experience lies in satisfying their emotional needs, and the process for producing the value of

the trip is centered on the functions of “being” and “living”. That is why the main motivation of tourists is to live experiences of great significance, interact with and enjoy nature, the most sought after and suitable environment for senior tourists (Garcês, Pocinho & Jesus, 2018). For nature tourism, soft nature activities are indicated, associating the cultural assets with the natural assets in active and well-being tourism (Chassagne & Everingham, 2019). Accordingly, it is important to find forms of tourism that allow the authenticity of places to be maintained and that provide more direct contact between tourists and communities, seeking authentic and memorable experiences. This is a way of preserving local identity, and the local population is valued, along with its tradition and memory, which reinforces its distinctiveness and uniqueness. From this perspective, through active learning and participating in rural activities, tourists understand the cultural traditions of the place, giving them a sense of self-realization, belonging, and sharing know-how experiences and memories. Kirillova, Letho and Cai (2016) point out that experiential tourism, especially in the current ‘experience economy’, must be characterized by the values of creativity and spirituality (meaningful experiences). The vision of tourism as a spiritual activity seeks personal fulfilment and the enrichment and inner well-being of tourists who want a transformative experience. Innovation in tourism products and the improvement of tourist experiences should thus promote happiness, quality of life, psychological well-being, positive emotions, and relaxation, as well as individual growth, presenting great potential. So, it is important to attain immaterial values during the experiences of the trip, the immaterial aspects of the activities offered, and the creation of a sublime feeling in a person’s consciousness. These are immaterial or spiritual factors of existence that can be found in travel and can be manifested and experienced in all aspects and types of tourism. Natural experience and positive connectivity in tourism is also explained by the fact that travelers search for quality of life and cultural diversity. As tourism is a social and cultural phenomenon, and not only economic, a visitor is a person whose aim is leisure and recreation but also health, education, or other purposes. Bosangit, Hibbert and McCabe (2015) write that the idea of tourism combines everything that tourists experience in the destination, encompassing their behaviors, perceptions, emotions, and cognitions. So, experiences with meaning for personal growth are fundamental. Marujo (2014) shows that these are built from different elements, including getting to know the destination, shared experience with people, activities, motivations, and prior experiences. In a natural environment of active and positive aging, the convergence on an exploration of the well-being experience allows the emergence of senior tourism in the 21st century, driven by new challenges in the social structure, the ageing trend of western populations, and the affirmation of leisure (Medeiros, 2021). According to Wray and Weiler (2014), wellness tourism is important for regional destinations. It includes spiritual forms of tourism that encompass a positive and holistic understanding of health, incorporating physical, psychological, and social dimensions. The authors postulate that natural and cultural resources are the main assets of a location for wellness tourism, and that they are relational and living in the core of what makes the place unique. Hence, Remoaldo (2017) highlights that local communities must be heard and must play a significant role in the planning and development of cultural and traditional tourism. Thus, the community’s cultural and traditional values associated with nature can increase the social well-

being and quality of life in the community (Duxbury, 2021; Frumkin et al., 2017; He, Gallagher & Min, 2002).

Tourism in farming communities is the opposite of mass tourism of a large scale. This small-scale tourist service is characterized by small investment, integrated into nature, with the engagement of local communities. Therefore, it is a sustainable activity and promotes better quality of life for the population and reduces environmental impact. Thus, it can reinforce the interaction between residents and visitors for economic, social, and environmental sustainability. In this sense, nature and Madeiran rural traditions are interconnected through ancient agricultural practices (Fontinha, 2013). These are associated with the local population's sociocultural way of life that is the base for experiential tourism in Madeira, together with nature, cultural and enogastronomic tourism.

Tourist experiences are multidimensional, fruition or learning experiences, including feelings like well-being, fulfilment, peace, and harmony. To stimulate these emotions, it is important to involve tourists in local communities, which allows significant moments of learning and unique memories of interaction to be created, with a sense of the people and places visited. These experiences can be lived through slow travel, staying more time in the place to have immersive and authentic experiences in the local community.

3. CONTEXTUALIZATION OF THE STUDY

This paper refers to the case study of the island of Madeira, Portugal, as a natural and sociocultural tourist destination. Madeira has a subtropical climate characterized by mild temperatures throughout the year. The diversity of mountains and valleys make up a dense, endemic forest called Laurissilva (laurel forest, dominated by laurel trees), classified by UNESCO as a World Natural Heritage Site (1999). Contact with nature, characterized by tall mountains, peaks, valleys, and paths, as a unique landscape that can be visited all year round, is a crucial element in influencing tourists' decision to travel and visit Madeira (ACIF, 2015). From the abundance of water in this native forest, levadas were built from the time of the island's settlement (1425) and served to transport water for domestic consumption, agricultural irrigation, power, and later, from the 20th century, to supply hydroelectric power plants (Santos & Correia, 2017; Quintal, 2013). Levadas are an important tourist product in Madeira and are candidates for the UNESCO World Heritage of Humanity (2023). Levada walking (hiking activity close to the water channels) leads into experiential and wellness tourism that brings together physical activity in nature, connection to local people, and Madeiran cultural traditions. Nowadays, the levadas (as a tourist offer) are used for tourism activities connected to nature and health, but they represent much more than physical and natural activities. Levadas are a means of knowledge transmission that includes historical information and narratives from the local

population, highlighting traditional Madeiran activities associated with nature and agricultural routines. Madeira, as Fontinha (2013) and Quintal (2013) explain, offers diversity and richness of vegetation and a unique environment. As the most important natural area of preserved forest is in the north of the island in higher areas, the Laurissilva is mostly found in the municipalities of Santana, São Vicente, and Porto Moniz, with constant humidity and rain distributed throughout the year. The authors point out that in the platforms between the Laurissilva uplands and the agricultural lowlands, part of the forest consists of pure or mixed stands of introduced species such as eucalyptus, maritime pine, acacia, sweet chestnut, oak and walnut, among others, which confer varied forms and colors on the rural landscapes. Thus, the Madeiran landscape remains unique due to its complex orography and huge environmental wealth, as well as the traces introduced by the populations, namely the poios or terraces of cultivated land, made with dry-stone walls on the slopes of the mountains. Fontinha (2013) highlights the exceptional beauty that the rural landscape displays, with the colors and shapes resulting from the agricultural crops, especially those grown on terraces and stone walls, along sloping hillsides, amongst stables (palheiros), rural houses, farms, and levadas, with dense upland woods and the vast blue sea below. Therefore, contact with the local farming communities and unique rural landscapes, natural and cultural, is highly valued by tourists.

4. METHODOLOGY

To ensure the sustainable development of Madeira's rural spaces, a holistic approach of natural and cultural resources from different localities of the island is presented. The concept of sustainability used includes ecological dimensions, but also the economic and sociocultural, promoting the responsible use of local resources, and reducing environmental impacts. According to *Estratégia Turismo 2027* (2017), social sustainability must be assured, which means that tourism should generate a positive impact on the resident populations, as people are the prime asset of Portuguese tourism, together with history, culture, nature, gastronomy, wine, well-being, and others.

This is an exploratory qualitative study based on the description of existing data on traditional activities of the socio-historical, natural, and cultural heritage of rural Madeiran localities. Possibilities are added for diversification of products and places of tourist interest, contrary to the massification of tourism always at the same points of the island. The descriptive approach of published literature used for this paper results from a process of data collection about levadas and rural activities to propose complete well-being and meaningful experiences for visitors. The methodology used is thematic content analysis, mainly of the ethnographic publications about Madeiran traditional culture in rural areas. Techniques of thematic data analysis were applied to the corpus documents to show the relevance

of local traditions to Madeira's rural and sociocultural identity, for example, the importance of levadas to local communities, as well as for Madeiran tourism. The search for descriptive information about the selected local traditions and tourist activities led us to the synthesis of the different sources of information and approach perspectives. We used already published information about different rural activities of the traditional Madeiran culture to contextualize and exemplify suggestions of active tourism for visitors. The process of thematic content analysis, as a qualitative data treatment method, involves analyzing transcripts, identifying themes within those data, and gathering examples of those themes from the texts. In this case, data collection and analysis about Madeiran rural activities and traditional events were made through book publications. From there, we listed themes or categories of tourist interest, such as Madeira's sociocultural identity, local traditions, the history of levadas and levada walks (a tourist product), irrigation of agricultural plantations from levadas, handicrafts in rural areas, enogastronomic products, uses and customs by locality. These were the final categories of local and regional values established to be used for proposing tourist activities, involving senior residents and visitors. Then, considering the selected themes, we worked on suggestions for meaningful local, traditional, and authentic experiences. The main aim was the symbiosis of contact with the senior rural population together with physical activities in nature, through levadas, for experiential and well-being tourism. In this study, we also use field notes to provide a descriptive account of the perceptions of tourists about Madeiran natural and traditional realities.

The proposals presented aim to recover rural values and traditions, valuing the senior population of Madeira, with local benefits, in which tourism is interconnected with culture and with the places visited. Meaningful connections with rural communities are made for visitors, promoting local development, which is fundamental for ecological sustainability, and in which nature is associated with the traditional lifestyle. Here, cultural, and natural values are authentically intertwined, allowing a symbiosis of tourists with locals, and guaranteeing the quality of tourist experiences in their genuine rural contexts.

5. PROPOSALS OF LOCAL TRADITIONS FOR EXPERIENTIAL, WELL-BEING, AND NATURE-BASED ACTIVE TOURISM

Local traditions are part of the rural and sociocultural heritage that constitutes the identity of Madeira. It is Intangible Cultural Heritage (UNESCO, 2003), important to value and preserve for residents and visitors. Therefore, we propose to contribute to the symbiosis of local traditions with tourists by means of suggestions of rural and immersive active tourism and well-being activities in nature together with the local senior population. The tourist interest in authentic local experiences provides an opportunity to involve the senior Madeiran population with the participation

of tourists in traditional activities, for example in agricultural land (like plantation, irrigation, harvesting, etc.), and in the farmers' and artisans' houses (making homemade bread, handicrafts, etc.). Simultaneously, it includes physical activity in nature, with levada walks in the localities visited, to know the place and its natural and cultural landscapes, as local and regional heritage.

For this study, we suggest activities in nature and in rural spaces related to local traditions of Madeira covering the municipalities of Ponta do Sol (Madalena do Mar and Canhas), São Vicente (Boaventura and Lameiros), Santana (S. Jorge and Ilha), and Santa Cruz (Camacha and Santo da Serra). So, four municipalities are included, leaving out Porto Moniz, Calheta, Ribeira Brava, Câmara de Lobos, Funchal, Machico, and Porto Santo, since it is not possible to cover everything in this work. Funchal was not considered because it is the capital of the Madeira archipelago, and therefore it is the municipality with least rural areas.

We do not refer to rural accommodation, as this would be another study. Therefore, for the proposed activities, tourists can either stay in hotels in the cities, or in rural accommodation in the localities visited. This work is not suitable for going into detail on the trend of slow tourism and creative tourism either.

5.1. LAND PLANTATION AND IRRIGATION

To participate in plantation and irrigation activities in farming lands, visitors can choose different rural localities of Madeira. For example, one suggestion is the path Vereda do Nateiro (Madalena do Mar, in Ponta do Sol), an opportunity to walk and do a traditional activity with the local population. Visitors can enjoy the natural and cultural landscape of small earth terraces and learn about the banana production cycle as explained by local farmers. This path relates to a diversity of small levadas which serve for irrigation of the banana plantations. The presence of tourists is more than a visit: "It is a social, healthy experience with the local community and a humanized landscape in harmony with nature" (tourist, 45 years old). After participating in the irrigation of banana tree plantations from a levada, tourists and residents can fraternize in the local tavern. Together, they can have a traditional drink, poncha, with dentinho, a homemade snack. It can be dried skipjack (gaiado seco), corn cooked with fava beans (milho cozido com favas), or even wheat soup (sopa de trigo), among others. Sometimes the tourists can also have the experience of preparing the traditional drink.

At Canhas, in the same municipality of Ponta do Sol, there is the annual "Regional Fair for Sugarcane and Its Derivatives", which takes place in March at the local farmers' market. This is the time of the year when the harvest of sugarcane starts. Visitors can walk along small paths that accompany little levadas to conduct the irrigation water to poios and between them. Tourists can see and participate in the activity of cutting the plant and preparing it for transportation. Then, the sugarcane is carried out by men on their backs to the road, and by car to the Engenho da Calheta. Visitors can also be taken to the sugarcane transformation factory in the municipality of Calheta. Here, they can follow the process of making sugarcane honey and sugarcane brandy and then, at the bar on site, taste sugarcane honey cake with sugarcane brandy.

5.2. TERRACES AND STABLES

Due to the mountainous orography of Madeira, the rural landscapes are made with terraces, called *poios* on the island. About the name *poio*, Barcelos (2016) defines it as “small earth terrace”. He recognizes the *poios* as heritage with a markedly regional identity, constituting a humanized landscape in harmony with nature, due to being equipped with dry-stone walls. It is a unique cultural landscape that must be preserved, as they are authentic manually made stone monuments, punctuating the landscape along with the stables, also built of stone. Stables are called *palheiros* in Madeira Island because they were covered with straw and were used to store it in the upper part, as it served as food for the cows, which were raised in the lower part. In Boaventura (municipality of São Vicente), tourists can walk on Levada dos Tornos, starting around Lombo do Urzal. The path goes towards Fajã do Penedo with abundant vegetation. Visitors can enjoy the different species of flora and fauna endemic to the island of Madeira, with beautiful views which make the tour a unique experience. After the levada walk, also enjoying the views of terraces with stables, and rural houses, they can visit a farming plantation, learning about and participating in some activities in the cultivated land, *poios* or terraces, together with the farmers. Visitors also can buy local, fresh products, mainly vegetables and fruit. At the same time, they can visit and understand the importance of stables and corrals to raise cows and goats, respectively, as well as the grazing of sheep, in the lives of farmers, including animal manure to fertilize crops in the fields of agricultural land.

5.3. LEVADAS, CEREALS, AND MILLS

The levadas are accompanied by land routes and paths that allow and encourage walking (Quintal, 2010). They were built in the dense mountains of Madeira, especially at the highest points, such as the area of the Levada das 25 Fontes (in the municipality of Calheta) that has a variation in altitude between 850 and 1300 meters. It is located on the north and inland of the island, due to the existence of greater rainfall and vegetation on those dense areas of Madeira’s Laurissilva forest. There are levadas through the forest to bring water for agriculture, as they are at the origin of secondary water courses for irrigation of cultivated land. In different rural areas, levada walks provide diverse and unique landscapes and they can be the first comprehensive historical and sociocultural explanation and view of the visited localities.

Santos and Correia (2017) present a collection of texts and photographs about levadas, including the builders, the *levadeiro* (person responsible for the distribution of the irrigation water), and the rotating water, showing the need to conserve this Madeiran cultural heritage. The authors highlight the historical and sociocultural importance of levadas to the survival of Madeirans for centuries, conserving ancient terms and folk tales or legends. They show that levadas are not only walks, as they are inseparable from the rural population’s life.

Through levada walking, we can explore experiential and wellness tourism that brings together physical activity in nature, connection to local people, and Madeiran cultural traditions. For example, the Levada do Rei or Levada do

Ribeiro Bonito is more than a levada walk; it includes beautiful rural landscapes over Santana and São Jorge, with abundant water and small waterfalls giving rise to streams. Plus, the Laurissilva forest has very dense vegetation with typical trees such as til (*Ocotea foetens*), the laurel (*Laurus novocanariensis*), the vinhático (*Persea indica*), and birds: the bis-bis (*Regulus ignicapillus maderensis*) and the tentilhão (*Fringilla coelebs maderensis*). At the end of the levada walk, a green scenario of plants, waterfalls and streams, and indigenous trees is the perfect natural place to meditate and relax inside the Laurissilva forest. The meaning of this levada experience, for a 61-year-old tourist from northern Europe, was transmitted through this testimony: "This is an important natural sanctuary for our mental health. When you open your senses this water and this natural green refresh our mind and renews our mood". These diverse natural stimuli from flora and fauna create a multisensorial and memorable experience that changes our mood and mental health. After relaxing, tourists can have a picnic included in the walking activity, next to the "mother" or source of the levada. Then, the group will return from the forest to the inhabited places in the locality of S. Jorge, in Santana.

In this locality, tourists can visit a water mill restored by the Regional Secretariat for Tourism and Culture, in Achadinha. The Achadinha water mill has been working for more than 300 years, thanks to the waterpower of Levada do Rei. Historically, in Madeira, there was the production of a large amount of cereal. Currently, a little wheat and some corn is planted. The old grain mills were abandoned, most of them in ruins. Some have been restored, but the only cereal mill that still works is the one at São Jorge. Even today, the population go to the person in charge for the water mill to grind wheat, corn, barley, and rye, as it was done in the old days. Tourists who visit the Levada do Rei also want to meet and interact with this person to understand the usefulness of the mill in the preparation of agricultural products, particularly corn. A testimony from a 62-year-old tourist who visited the water mill was: "It is interesting to see the link between the Levada's water and the operation of the mill and the usefulness of local products. Here you can see the importance of agricultural products and the role of the water mill for the livelihood of the population. This process must be preserved and supported".

After visiting the water mill in Achadinha, it can be explained to visitors that corn is the cereal used to make a traditional meal of the Madeiran population: boiled corn accompanied by mackerel in vilão sauce (made with garlic, wine, vinegar, parsley or marjoram, minced pepper and salt). Then, tourists can have the opportunity to eat it together with the locals, preferentially in a family home available to receive them. In this way, they feel integrated into the locality, including contact with the senior population.

At the same time, the residents can share stories about the traditional products of their gastronomy, and about the visited place.

5.4. HOMEMADE BREAD, DRY WINE, AND OTHER DRINKS

Bread and wine are two products of food for humanity with local and regional specificities. In Madeira, there is the traditional homemade bread, the best known being called pão de Santana (Santana bread) because it is made in this locality

of the island of Madeira. The other traditional bread of Madeira is bolo do caco, baked on a traditional stone over a wood fire, and eaten with garlic butter. Tourists can visit Santo da Serra (municipality of Santa Cruz), walking the Levada Nova pedestrian path, where there is a diversity of endemic plants. The walk alongside the water has also landscapes with waterfalls and viewpoints. After this active, well-being nature walk, visitors can participate in the old way of making bread in a rural place as experiential tourism, a unique, enriching, and meaningful experience. They will have the possibility of doing this activity in a family home in Santo da Serra, which is available to receive them. They will learn and experience how to make homemade bread in a wood-fired oven, together with the senior population. Then, residents and tourists will share stories and experiences, while eating the bread on-site with local artisanal vinho seco (dry wine). This name distinguishes it from the Madeira wine or vinho tratado (treated wine), made with Sercial, Verdelho, Bual or Malvasia grape varieties. There is also American wine, whose grapes are considered the best to eat and the most fragrant. Thus, Madeira has a vast array of locally produced wines. In Santo da Serra, visitors can also enjoy the local artisanal cider and visit a producer's house to see how this drink is made. Locals who agree to receive small groups of tourists at home will have the possibility of selling their products, with benefits for both groups.

Nowadays, poncha is a well-known drink which is much appreciated by tourists, but there are other less-known drinks like: pé-de-cabra ('crowbar': red dry wine, black beer, lemon peel, sugar, cacao, eggs, and milk, a drink to give strength to manual workers), cortadinho (coffee with Madeira wine and lemon peel), bebida de arraial (wine with orangeade), and mexida ('stirred mixture', a beaten drink with red dry wine, sugar, lemon peel, and black beer). Other traditional drinks are liqueurs such as verdinha (brandy with herbs), raisin liqueur or tim-tam-tum, in addition to macia (soft brandy with sugarcane honey). These are very common at festive times to drink and offer to visitors, especially at Christmas.

5.5. TRADITIONAL GASTRONOMY

For tourists to have an authentic experience of typical dishes from Madeira, the best way is with the experience of what a Madeiran village is and what people eat there. For example, being able to eat a real soup of cabbage with beans, potatoes, chayote, pasta, and pork, freshly made in a rural house; or eat breakfast with kale rice and fried beans from the night before, with coffee. A good example of how it is possible to involve the rural population in this type of activities organized for the reception of a small group of tourists in rural areas is the RTP-Madeira television program, named "Local Gastronomy". In this, a chef interacts with the senior population from different rural locations of Madeira, showing recipes and ancient ways of making traditional food.

Traditional gastronomy like moganga or bogango soup (made with moganga, thick pasta, peas or fava beans, and pork), crushed wheat soup, tuna steak, black scabbardfish stew, mackerel with vilão sauce, scabbardfish with onions, beef with wine and garlic, and boiled and fried corn are listed by Figueira (1996). In *Traditional Gastronomy of Madeira and Porto Santo* (2013), in addition to these,

there are grilled limpets, swordfish, dried skipjack, beef broth, fried mackerel, Festa meat (minced beef stewed with garlic, bay leaves, onions, tomatoes, red wine, carrots, peppers and potatoes, called Festa because it means Christmas in Madeira, and this was the biggest party of the year with plenty of meat), Madeiran stew, hunter's rabbit, cooked yam, etc. Concerning traditional Madeiran cakes, Figueira (1996) refers to the bolo de mel de figos (fig honey cake), bolo de família (made with flour, sugar, eggs, lard, cinnamon, ground fennel, powdered cloves, soda, Madeira wine and sugar cane honey), bolo preto (made with flour, sugar, cane honey, eggs, ground cinnamon, ground cloves, raisins, chopped walnuts and citron, and butter or lard), broas de mel (also made with cane honey, flour, sugar, lemon zest, cinnamon, soda, butter or margarine, and egg), among many others. These were made at home with figs honey, which was more accessible than sugarcane honey. Other honey made at home was that of wine in must (before its fermentation), used across generations in traditional medicine and food, as sweets were important at festivities to separate them from the other common times of the year. Couscous is also one of the regional products. The Madeira Ethnographic Museum (2015), in *Traditional gastronomy: couscous*, documents that it was introduced to Madeira by the Muslims, who brought it from Maghreb at the beginning of the settlement of the island. Couscous has been preserved in Calheta, Ponta do Sol and São Vicente, where there are still elderly women who retain this knowledge. Traditional Madeiran society is still a network community, and older people are very generous and have time to share their knowledge. Thus, tourism can contribute to protecting this traditional knowledge, lending it sociocultural and economic value. It can be a way of reviving these ancient Madeiran gastronomic traditions that tend to disappear if not preserved. We suggest visits to the places where the artisanal manufacture of Madeiran couscous exists, particularly a family home in Lameiros, in the municipality of São Vicente, after a levada walk from Caminho do Pé da Rocha to Lameiros, admiring the landscape with the slopes of the mountains. Visitors can learn the couscous production process, in which it is cooked in a couscous bowl after being prepared and wrapped in a linen towel, as is traditional. They can participate in making it manually and, after cooking it, eat it warm with butter. This is an interesting community activity for residents' and visitors' well-being, as they can be part of traditional, sustainable activity. Through connection with locals, it becomes a meaningful and transformative experience and is both practical and useful.

5.6. HANDICRAFTS, WOOL, AND LINEN CLOTHING

Active, well-being tourism implies the involvement of tourists in the local community, participating in traditional handicrafts and other activities. An example would be a tour through Camacha (a locality in the municipality of Santa Cruz), walking on the Levada da Serra, a circular route that starts and ends in the center of the locality. This allows visitors to gain a comprehensive understanding of the community and see the characteristic wicker trees in the streams, which the guide should point out, as they are used to make the local wicker handicraft. Then, they can visit a local wicker craftsman to learn and experience some basic techniques of his work, including the fact that the wicker must undergo treatment until it is ready to make

wicker products. After a typical lunch of crushed wheat soup, tuna steak, or black scabbardfish stew in a local restaurant, we propose a visit to the Rochão Folklore Group, in Rochão (Camacha), to better understand these traditions.

One of the most traditional rural products used by farmers and shepherds is clothing made of wool from sheep. The caps and ear caps, made of wool, are traditional Madeiran clothes. The ear caps completely cover the head, with two small side flaps, the 'ears' that, depending on the need, are either folded up or let down, covering the ears. They are normally brown in color, sober pieces used as outerwear, especially in rural areas. For the linen clothes, made from a plant, the traditional work is known by artisans who still make pieces of this natural clothing. In Fernandes (2016), we can find information about the wool tools, showing their importance for the traditional Madeira clothing and customs, present in folk groups. These products continue to be used by older farmers, mainly the ear caps for the cold winter temperatures.

By means of a visit to Camacha, tourists can learn about the traditional work with wool in Madeira and visit artisans that make woolen ear caps. These activities can be done by organizing a get-together with traditional herb teas and cakes for visitors and residents, with the collaboration of the local Pilgrimage and Traditions Group Association (Associação Grupo Romarias e Tradições) for an exchange of knowledge.

For linen, we suggest a visit to Ilha (in the municipality of Santana) where the main activity of the population is also agriculture, and two thirds of the parish are located within the Laurissilva forest. Here, visitors can experience nature at the site of Achada do Marques, part of the Natural Park of Madeira. They can also see the view from the viewpoints of Eiras and Cabeço do Resto, which offers a perspective of the parish, from the inhabited area to the surrounding nature. Then, tourists can participate in a small workshop on making traditional linen pieces, together with local artisans, with the support of the Association of Terrains of the Mountains of the Parish of Ilha. The current name of this association is Serras da Ilha, "Association of Compartes Ilha Autêntica". They are a social organization that can contribute to the reception of tourists in the place. In their local facilities, visitors can have a traditional meal of potatoes, sweet potato, and yam, cooked with pork, or served with fish. This will be important involvement of entities from the place, through a gastronomic get-together, favoring contact of visitors with the senior population.

The tangible and intangible natural and cultural heritage of Madeira is originally from rural areas with traditional plantations that give rise to the regional products used in typical gastronomy and drinks. Thus, some of the suggested tourist activities are seasonal, such as harvesting sugarcane. Others can be visited all year round, such as woolen handicrafts and wickerwork.

6. FINAL REMARKS

In this study, we have shown how it is possible to make a symbiosis of Madeiran rural traditions with active tourism and wellness experiences in nature, contributing to the sustainability of tourism destinations. With levada walks, sociocultural themes can be approached by localities, with a special focus on the knowledge of the senior population. Contact and involvement of tourists with local communities are fundamental in this. They can be involved by visits to family homes which are available to receive them and having the opportunity to sell artisanal products. Like this, visitors can participate in traditional rural, agricultural and handicraft activities, and enjoy typical regional cuisine and drinks with the locals.

Tourism can contribute to the preservation of traditional and rural activities of a locality or region if there is a sustainable strategy for local development (Duxbury, 2021). The island of Madeira has great potential in its rural and agricultural traditions as important natural and cultural heritage. Visitors have an interest in local activities, such as traditional gastronomy and regional products, as well as handicrafts and levada walking, in connection with environmental concerns and motivations. It is a kind of rural tourism with the transmission of the cultural knowledge and memories of the senior.

population, combined with experiential tourism, and well-being in nature. By participating in rural activities in nature and doing local levada walks, visitors have physical and psychological health benefits. At the same time, they have authentic and meaningful experiences, as each locality of Madeira has its own particularities and cultural elements.

Thus, Madeiran's rurality and traditional activities, such as levadas, agriculture, gastronomy, and handicrafts, favor discovery of Madeira's natural and cultural heritage and provide routes and places to visit it. Therefore, in rural areas there is a unique combination of the three realities of history, culture, and nature, clearly present in the authenticity of their landscapes. In other words, the rural space allows enjoyment of nature in contact with the preservation of local culture. For example, cultivated terraces on lofty mountains, irrigated by levadas, and fertilized with animal manure from the stables on site, are cultural landscapes which reflect the specific techniques of land use linked to traditional customs. The interactions between visitors and residents in their natural environment testify to the Madeiran collective sociocultural identity. Madeira has unique natural landscapes with strong attractiveness, but this offer should be complemented with contact with the rural population. The examples offer authentic rural life activities with an educational factor and ethical commitment with great concern about the environment and local communities. It implies concern about the ecological, social, and economic sustainability of the visited places. At the same time, contact with nature and rural spaces facilitates and provides conditions for the practice of physical activities.

Natural and cultural landscapes of Madeira allow active and well-being tourism through immersive, genuine, and enriching experiences, and the social transformation of the rural population, through their appreciation. The candidacy

of the levadas of Madeira for World Cultural Heritage is an opportunity for the participation of residents in Madeiran natural and traditional life, with the testimony of their life stories and narratives of the past routines of people in their localities. This is why the project *Levadas com alma* (Levadas with soul) is important for the preservation of this knowledge, mainly the use of levadas for different purposes. The ancestral use of levadas explains the current sociocultural reality that still needs them for family and commercial agriculture. So, the proposals of tourist activities suggested can contribute to the promotion and preservation of local culture and nature, with the creation of a differentiated offer to visitors, in unique rural places.

The limitations of this paper are mainly the lack of fieldwork that remains to be done to better describe, contextualize, extend, and specify the rural activities of each locality to be included in tourist itineraries. The researchers' contact with local realities and communities will allow them to better understand the senior population of the places, their physical and psychological capacities, and their interest and availability to welcome some tourists to participate in rural activities, such as plantations and irrigation of the cultivated land with the levadas. It is also necessary to investigate the possibilities of involving local communities with visitors in sociocultural activities, such as making homemade bread and handicrafts, and sharing knowledge between residents and tourists. It also remains to discuss with them their interests and motivations for participating in rural activities as a product of the tourist offer, along with levada walks in the respective localities. It will further be necessary to establish contacts with local entities, public and private, about their interest in investing in and supporting these initiatives, as well as involving young students in technical higher education in tourism from the University of Madeira in this tourist project, and who belong to various locations in Madeira.

The next step will be to research existing local resources, with the support of cultural associations in the field, as well as the motivations and opportunities for including the rural population more in experiential, educational, and well-being tourist activities. The elderly and tourists will be agents of their own transformation, valuing nature, and local traditions, and preserving them through sociocultural tourist activities that allow a true connection with communities and places. It will be a project with various dimensions: rural tourism, including the practices of traditional knowledge (transmitted through several generations and at risk of disappearing); active experiential tourism of well-being in nature; and sociocultural sustainable tourism, all with the involvement of the local population.

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