

Gastronomy and paradiplomacy. The case of Portuguese Gastronomic Confraternities

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ABSTRACT

The promotion of Portuguese gastronomy involves diverse multi-level and multisectoral stakeholders, employing place branding to project positive territorial images and attract cultural and economic benefits. Among them are *Confrarias Gastronómicas* (Gastronomic Confraternities), associations dedicated to promoting national, regional, and local food cultures through public diplomacy means. This article presents a novel analysis at the intersection of gastronomy, paradiplomacy, and civic associations, examining the promotional practices and international outreach of Gastronomic Confraternities and evaluating their potential as paradiplomatic actors. Based on 227 survey responses, covering a broad and representative sample of 88 distinct Confraternities across Portugal, the study highlights their active role in advancing Portuguese gastronomy through various initiatives. It identifies key promotional mechanisms and characterises the operational dynamics of the confraternal movement, revealing a unique paradiplomatic capacity. Despite contributing to the international visibility of Portuguese culinary heritage, these associations face internal challenges, including underfunding, ageing membership, and limited civic engagement. Nevertheless, when integrated into broader gastrodiplomatic strategies, these territorialised actors can play a vital role in promoting Portugal's gastronomic identity through coordinated national and international efforts.

1. Introduction

The promotion of a country's or territory's gastronomy on the global stage often requires the involvement of various stakeholders from diverse sectors of society, each with their agendas. This includes government entities, civil society organisations, businesses, and academic institutions, all aiming to showcase a range of delicacies, products, and other offerings through either sporadic campaigns or more sustained strategies. For effective gastronomic promotion, whether through a place branding initiative or otherwise, it is essential to have a variety of promotional objects, agents, resources, channels, and dynamics in place. Within this framework, a centralised or networked, purposeful governance process may emerge, potentially adopting a multicentric approach. However, both governance models present distinct advantages and disadvantages.

In summary, these campaigns or policies aim to generate benefits for the country or territory, particularly through the projection and construction of a positive international image associated with the nation as a whole and its gastronomy in particular. The use of gastronomy for this purpose has been observed within the framework (and by making use) of public diplomacy or Track II diplomacy, especially in strategies related to place branding and gastrodiplomacy.

Specifically, the global promotion of Portuguese gastronomy is primarily conducted with tourism objectives, emanating from Tourism of Portugal. Nevertheless, there are other stakeholders, both public and private, at central, regional, or local levels, whose dynamics often centre on gastronomy (that is, focused on gastronomic promotion as a means of promoting tourism, as well as economic, political, mental, or other aspects). The role of these stakeholders in promoting Portuguese gastronomy worldwide is significant for the overarching aim of

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enhancing the country and its territories abroad. This includes local and regional public administrations (Municipal Councils, Associations of Municipalities, Regional Coordination Commissions, among others), as well as the contributions of *Confrarias Gastronómicas* (hereinafter referred to as Gastronomic Confraternities), both of which possess paradiplomatic capabilities for promoting gastronomy on a global scale.

Typically, the concept of paradiplomacy is applied solely to organisations within the subnational public sector. However, due to the projection capacity, political agenda, resources, and cultural diffusion associated with Gastronomic Confraternities, their efforts can be understood as a diplomatic instrument for disseminating the identity of a territory or a territorial brand. Despite their distinct status, both entities aim, through their actions, to achieve the gastronomic and cultural singularity of their communities and territories.

The Gastronomic Confraternities, as civic, food-centric associative entities (i.e., those that develop their mission around, with, and for food or gastronomy), employ diplomatic tools, particularly Track II diplomacy, to advance their confraternal objectives. Their efforts are directed towards the valorisation and promotion of specific dishes, collections of delicacies, or food products, as well as gastronomic territories. While studies on paradiplomacy and gastrodiploacy exist, the role of civic associations, such as Gastronomic Confraternities, as active agents in this process represents a novel and underexplored field of research, which this article aims to address.

To gain a deeper understanding of the work conducted by Portuguese Gastronomic Confraternities, particularly regarding their practices and international projection efforts, a documentary analysis was performed in conjunction with the development of an online survey, which included both open-ended and closed questions. 227 Members of Gastronomic Confraternities completed the survey.

Departing from the literature review, the following research question was formulated: “How do Portuguese Gastronomic Confraternities perceive their functioning and their paradiplomatic capacity/role for domestic and international gastronomic promotion?”.

1.1. Literature review

1.1.1. Gastropolitics, public policy and place branding

The gastronomic promotion of a country or territory can be analysed from the perspective of the agents involved and their relationships, the practices and activities undertaken, as well as the channels employed. The intersection between gastronomy and politics, whether in terms of political discourse or the cycle encompassing the formulation, implementation, and evaluation of public policies, has been designated as gastropolitics (Cabral et al., 2024a).

The concepts (and processes) of country, nation, regional, place, local, or city branding, gastronomy have been employed through the creation of territorial brands that activate marketing strategies in the development and management of the image and perceptions of a “territory-product” (Jerez, 2023; Rojas-Méndez and Khoshnevis, 2023). As a focus of public policy, gastronomic place branding aims at communication and territorial promotion, identity sharing, attraction of visitation and engagement with the territory, contributing to the *consumption* of elements of the territory that encompass gastronomy (Rojas-Méndez and Khoshnevis, 2023; Tijani et al., 2024). Specifically, although the aforementioned concepts represent different scales, they fundamentally encompass the encouragement of interaction with the environment of the promoted location, including its population, culture, and heritage, the attraction of investments and migrants, the increase in exports from that territory, and the generation of favourable mental representations (for instance, through the appreciation of peace, security, or justice) (McGrath and Frankel, 2021).

1.1.2. Gastrodiploacy

Diplomatically and institutionally, place branding is the substrate of public diplomacy strategies as a mechanism of creating and managing

territorial brands, through soft power and soft geopolitical positions (Dineri et al., 2024). Gastrodiploacy, part of the broader gastropolitical field, shapes the perspective used in this article, corresponding to an integrated, purposeful, multilevel, public policy for the gastronomic promotion of a country or territory in the world, through the use of diplomatic mechanisms, intending to attract economic, tourist, social and cultural and even mental benefits (Cabral et al., 2024a; Rockower, 2020; Sontikul, 2017).

1.1.3. Paradiplomacy and track II diplomacy: a place for gastronomic confraternities?

The capacity for international projection of a region, territory, or place, made by official subnational entities (typically municipalities or other types of regional and local administrative bodies) and directed mainly to international actors (and foreign audiences), is defined as paradiplomacy (Kuestra et al., 2025). However, other regional or local non-governmental actors (NGOs), whose institutional goals may align with those of official bodies, collaborate with official subnational authorities by complementing or even assuming their duties. For instance, within the cultural sphere, NGOs such as Gastronomic Confraternities are traditionally and theoretically situated within a framework of Track II diplomacy, defined as “an unofficial, non-governmental avenue for dialogue and discussion that supports official diplomatic initiatives” (Akinyoyin, 2024, p. 6). However, these actors have independent diplomatic resources and capacities that enable them to engage – either autonomously or collaboratively – with diplomatic efforts (Artisti, 2013). This international engagement can promote culture, specifically gastronomy and foodways, and sometimes establish agenda-setting relations with subnational official bodies (Cabral et al., 2024a; Newland, 2022). These paradiplomatic efforts are typically projected outward from the country, through actions of place branding and cultural diplomacy. However, the role of diasporas and the network of emigrant organisations in the cultural representativeness of the country of origin is also important in cultural promotion, in general, and in gastronomy promotion, in particular. (Cabral et al., 2024a; Gois and Marques, 2023).

1.1.4. The agents of Portuguese gastronomy promotion

Several agents participate in the promotion of Portuguese gastronomy in the world. However, the governance of these efforts is carried out in a disjointed and multilevel manner, and is primarily associated with tourism concerns. As part of the so-called recognition of Portuguese gastronomy as an “intangible asset of Portugal’s cultural heritage”,¹ the National Commission for Gastronomy was created in 2001² to systematically explore and work on the definition of a promotion strategy for Portuguese gastronomy. Following contemporary gastronationalist movements around the world,³ it was one of the few (if not the only) known coordinated operations for the integrated (and participated⁴) promotion of Portuguese gastronomy, known in Portugal until then. However, its end in 2006 dictated the end of this integrated effort, giving rise to centralised programs⁵ in which the official participation of other actors (namely, subnational agents) was limited. However, this did not hinder several agents of Portuguese society from

¹ Resolution of the Council of Ministers No. 96/2000 of 26 July.

² Resolution of the Council of Ministers No. 169/2001 of 19 December.

³ Specially in Asia (but not exclusively), from where Thailand’s pioneering approach stems out in 2002 (Strugar, 2017).

⁴ Initially, it had 23 elements from the various areas of gastronomy, from agricultural products, catering, culture, beverages and nightlife establishments and associations, academia, and also gastronomic Confraternities, through training and employment and public administrations of various levels.

⁵ Such as “Taste Portugal” or “Taste Portugal”, which brands’ use rights were transferred from Tourism of Portugal to the project promoters such as the Portuguese Academy of Gastronomy or the Association of Hotels, Restaurants and Similar Establishments of Portugal, the latter remaining until 2023.

perceiving gastronomy and food,⁶ since the 19th and throughout the 20th century, as a way of communicating patriotic agendas and, later, nationalist agendas (Sobral, 2008).

The power relations established there give rise to a sociogram of the involvement of current stakeholders, which should also be analysed. For the modelling and description of this ecosystem of actors operating in Portuguese gastronomic promotion, we used the quintuple helix model by Carayannis and Campbell, due to its comprehensive analysis and integration of the views of Environment, Government, Academia, Industry, and Civil Society (Fig. 1). Initially shaped by the perspective of social ecology, this model has been used to create a transdisciplinary and integrated perspective and vision of social facts (Carayannis and Campbell, 2010). Moreover, a sociogram analysis of social relations “is an approach and set of techniques used to study the exchange of resources among actors (i.e., individuals, groups, or organisations)” (Haythornthwaite, 1996), focusing on the study of actors, their formal relationships and their ties (Chang, 2021).

The overlap with a visual sociogram model allows us to identify not only the key actors but also to define the power relations between the entities in the promotion of Portuguese gastronomy, perceiving their coordination (or lack thereof) and the gaps, identifying inefficiencies and the need for strategic alignment (Tubaro et al., 2016).

1.1.5. Gastronomy in Portugal – tourism, heritage and beyond

By analysing the general environment around gastronomy, an intensification of tourist demand in Portugal (Tourism of Portugal, 2025) and an increase in gastronomic actions and events, as well as their media attention, is anticipated (Ó. Cabral et al., 2025). Despite its importance, formal food heritagisation, that is, the administrative procedure of registering heritage related to expressions of intangible cultural heritage in Portugal, does not keep up with the same pace as informal heritagisation processes.⁷ These are understood as the processes of “concealment, memory, selection, forgetting, and promotion” (Lucas and Moreira, 2025, p. 6) framed in complex spaces of essentialisation, *lieux de memoire* and identity manipulation associated with food practices and with the collective construction of meanings (Cadavez, 2013; Lucas and Moreira, 2025; Moreira, 2025), to which “new meanings and uses” can be endorsed (Moreira, 2025, p. 8).

The agents involved are numerous and range from cultural diplomacy (Porciani, 2019) to public administration bodies, producers, transformers, companies, specialists, among others (Moreira, 2025), all contributing to the heritagisation of tangible and intangible expressions related to food. The construction of institutional tourism in Portugal accompanies the efforts of promotion, and it is aware of it, at least, since the great Exhibitions in which Portugal participated in the first half of the 20th century (such as the 1937 Paris Universal Exposition) (Gomensoro, 2024). However, a nationalist food vision has also been studied (Sobral, 2007, 2016b, 2017), although requiring deeper studies as a motivation for the dissemination of national cuisine. Thus, following the various strategic plans for tourism in Portugal,⁸ gastronomic promotion primarily registers economic motivations (mostly tourist-related).

⁶ Particular importance is placed on the patriotic and nationalist framing of food, as a means to enhance its promotion (DeSoucey, 2010; Parasecoli, 2022).

⁷ As at “Matriz PCI – Inventário Nacional do Património Cultural Imaterial” (the Portuguese National Inventory of Intangible Cultural Heritage).

⁸ Generic programs such as PENT – National Strategic Plan for Tourism 2007–2013 (simply known as “PENT”), PENT – National Strategic Plan for Tourism (Revision) 2013–2015, Tourism Strategy 2027 or regional programs such as PEMTA 2030 – Strategic and Marketing Plan for Tourism in the Azores, 2019–2030 Action Plan for the Sustainability of the Azores Destination and Madeira Tourism Marketing Strategy 2017–2021, Madeira Tourism Strategy 2022–2027 and Action Plan for the Sustainability of the Madeira Destination 2022–2030.

From a government-design perspective, Tourism of Portugal is responsible for the promotion, enhancement, and sustainability of tourism activity and also for defining the national tourism strategy. Tourism of Portugal, a public institute of indirect administration of the Portuguese State under the Ministry of Economy, has included the promotion of Portuguese gastronomy in its strategic plans for tourism (with tourist appeal). Gastronomy is promoted in a partial and very limited way, given the (decreasing) space that national gastronomic assets have occupied in the various strategic plans for Tourism, when compared to the proliferation of actions and events around gastronomy and taking place in Portugal. The four objective mentions of gastronomic promotion and which are found in the “Tourism Strategy 2027”, in force, focus on 1) wine and wine tourism, 2) Portuguese fish, 3) the role and notoriety of Chefs and 4) the importance of Michelin stars (Tourism of Portugal, 2017).

Throughout the identified plans, Tourism of Portugal interconnects with other entities at other administrative levels to implement this strategy. However, all the entities identified in Fig. 1 include, in their own agendas, the promotion of Portuguese gastronomy worldwide, in a global, territorial, or even personalised manner. In the industry, the media role of gastronomy in its mobilisation for the generation of profits and synergies between agents is highlighted. This is the case of restaurants, TAP Air Portugal and marketing agencies.

Also, in civil society, the mobilisation of gastronomy is denoted, especially in relation to the formal and informal holders of culinary knowledge codified as Portuguese, which also includes civic, cultural and recreational bodies (such as the Gastronomic Confraternities). In the academic field, although the first hotel courses date back to the beginning of the 20th century (Revés, 2017), the establishment of the Lisbon School of Hospitality and Tourism in 1958 opened new avenues to gastronomic, culinary and food heritage education in Portugal.

2. Methodology

The methodology encompassed a bibliographic analysis and an online survey.

2.1. Survey

The survey was conducted directly through the Microsoft Forms platform. It was aimed at Members of Gastronomic Confraternities and comprised 29 questions, including both open-ended and closed-ended questions (multiple-choice and Likert scale). The questions, derived from the reviewed studies and the relationships between agents established in the literature review, were also based on the model for food-centric organisations by Cabral et al. (2024b).

The questions pertained to six dimensions: the sociodemographic characteristics of the respondents, their relationships with the Confraternity, the operational dynamics of the Confraternities, practices of gastronomic promotion both within Portugal and internationally, interactions with stakeholders, and considerations regarding internationalisation.

2.1.1. Survey validation through an experts' panel and pilot testing

Prior to collecting answers, the instrument was submitted to an Expert panel composed of three Experts. The panel was composed of one academic (an anthropologist), with previous work on Portuguese Confraternities, a journalist with a previous publication on Confraternities, and a Member of various Confraternities with more than 20 years of Confraternal experience. The validation step took place in January 2024. Based on the validation, changes and amendments were proposed to improve the wording and clarity of the survey questions. All these recommended amendments were incorporated into the final version. A pilot questionnaire was subsequently distributed to six individuals not belonging to the target sample in order to test the clarity and comprehension of the questions, assessing language aspects and the platform

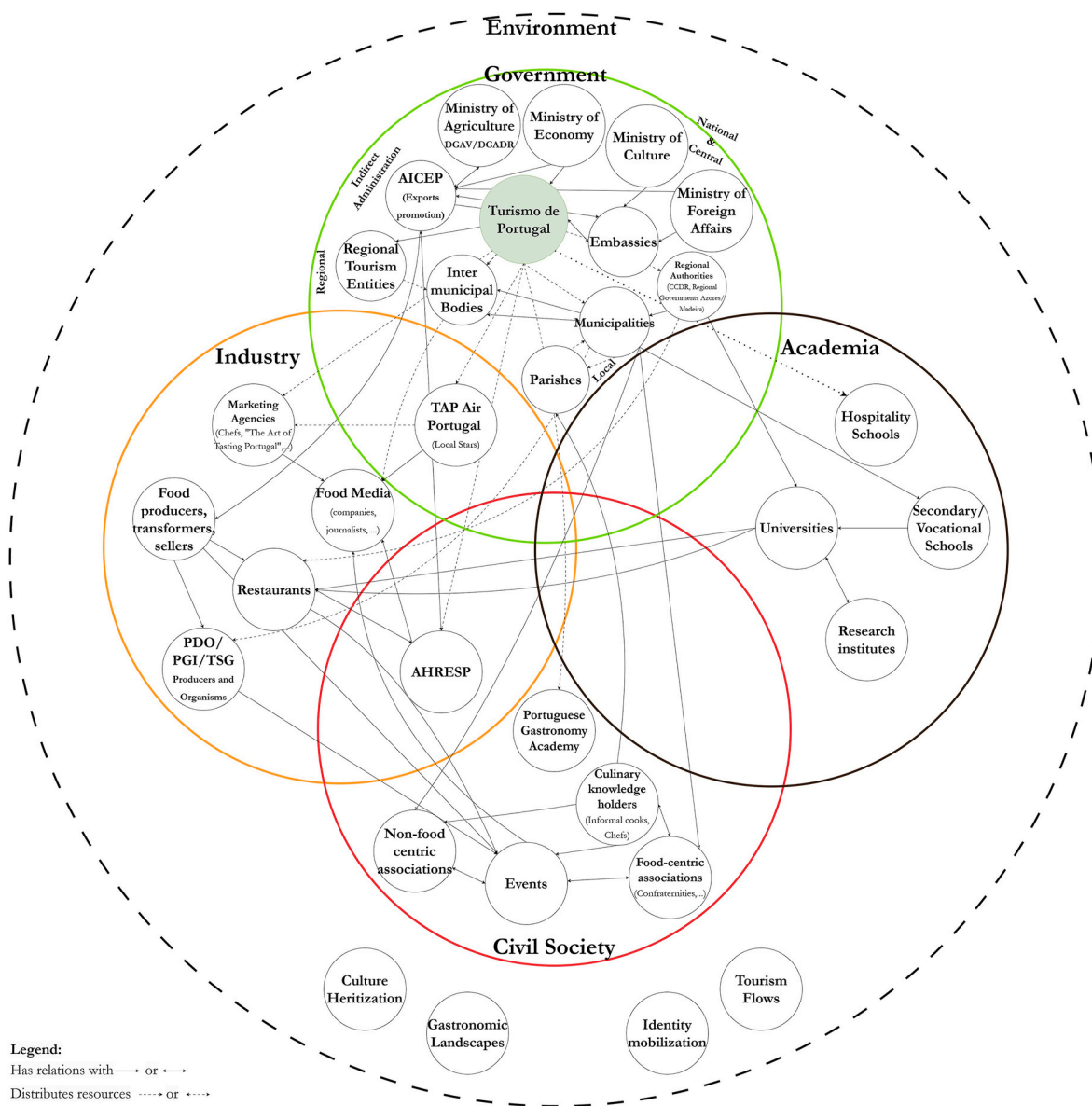


Fig. 1. The quintuple helix model and the sociogram relationships viewer applied to the agents of Portuguese gastronomy promotion. Source: Authors' elaboration. Illustration credits: draw.io.

usability (Chenail, 2011). The pilot testing deemed the tool suitable for collecting answers.

2.1.2. Answers analysis and coding

Closed responses were analysed using scoring calculations, while open-ended questions were examined through content analysis and inductive thematic analysis.

The open-ended questions were coded following the identification of themes and an iterative coding strategy that resulted in codings and subcodings. Through this coding tree, the interpretation was performed (Elo and Kyngäs, 2008). The coding mechanism resulted in eight main codes: 1) Promotion and dissemination practices, 2) Members, 3) Internal functioning, rules and bylaws, 4) Events, 5) Relationship with external entities and support/financing, 6) Preservation of tradition, authenticity and identity, 7) Modernisation, openness and renewal of the Confraternity movement, 8) Role of the FPCG.

2.1.3. Population

To examine the population of Confraternities in Portugal, and in light

of the absence of an official register, the informal social media page "Movimento Confrádico", established in 2024, was selected as a reference source. This page currently serves as a repository of active Confraternities in the country.⁹ A total of 216 Portuguese Confraternities were identified, encompassing gastronomic, bacchic, ethylic, and other thematic Confraternities, of which 194 are specifically Gastronomic Confraternities. Given the uncertainty regarding the Membership of these organisations, it was necessary to estimate the reference population. Drawing on the work of André and Cardoso (2019), who estimated an average of 89 Members per Confraternity in their ethnographic study involving 51 Confraternities, the total population was approximated to be around 17,266 individuals. For this population, with a 95 % confidence level and a 5 % margin of error, a sample size of 376 respondents was calculated.

⁹ This website aims to disseminate information about events and activities of Confraternities at the national level (<https://www.movimentoconfraternalo.pt/Confrarias>).

2.1.4. Sampling techniques

The employed sampling techniques were non-probabilistic and mixed, comprising convenience sampling and snowball sampling techniques. Both sampling methods present advantages and disadvantages.

The convenience sampling technique is widely used due to its efficiency, as it allows for rapid and cost-effective data collection. However, it is prone to strong selection bias, as participants are chosen based on accessibility rather than randomness, which often leads to the overrepresentation of certain groups and the systematic exclusion of others, while also being affected by volunteer bias (Stratton, 2023). The scientific literature generally considers convenience sampling a valuable technique in pilot or exploratory studies (Ahmed, 2024).

Regarding snowball sampling, although helpful in reaching hard-to-access populations, which is the case due to a lack of an official record of Confraternities and their Members, it tends to generate homogeneous samples due to participants recruiting within their own networks, thereby reinforcing selection and network biases, restricting diversity, and making it impossible to calculate sampling error (Ting et al., 2025).

Moreover, potential bias may also arise from the reliance on self-reporting by highly engaged Members, which can distort representativeness, and from the absence of longitudinal data or triangulation with external sources such as independent impact assessments.

2.1.5. Study invitation and answers collection

An invitation to participate in the study was disseminated via email to the identified Gastronomic Confraternities. Responses from adults who were, cumulatively, active Members of Gastronomic Confraternities in Portugal were deemed valid. Data collection took place between November 25, 2024, and January 15, 2025.

3. Results and findings

3.1. Results from bibliographic analysis

3.1.1. Portuguese gastronomic confraternities

The Portuguese Gastronomic Confraternities are food-centric social movements registered in Portugal as civic, cultural, and recreational associations, whose mission is the promotion and/or defence of a specific gastronomic product, a set of delicacies, or a given gastronomic territory (L. Cunha, 2018). Annually, they organise their most solemn and protocol activity, which is the “Chapter”. This moment of reunion serves for the enthronement of new Members (“Confreiras” and “Confrades”) and the expansion of confraternal relations with other agents. The Gastronomic Confraternities have two agglomerating and federative structures operating in Portugal: the Portuguese Federation of Gastronomic Confraternities (FPCG) and the CEUCO, the European Council of Confraternities, a transnational body that aggregates Confraternities with a European scope¹⁰.

3.1.2. Origin

Despite the debate as to its origin,¹¹ the first Gastronomic

¹⁰ FPCG registers – at the time of the article – 107 federated Gastronomic Confraternities while CEUCO has 21 gastronomic, ethylic and bacchic Confraternities, as of 2024. This information was collected directly from those institutions.

¹¹ The origin and functioning of the Gastronomic Confraternities refer to a debate that still exists in the literature. On the one hand, it seeks to fit them into the habits of the Roman collegia and Germanic gildas (Machado, 2004). On the other hand, it is suggested that the practices of religious Confraternities of Christian confession be mimicked, but also of professional Confraternities, in which groups of people congregated in Portugal, at least since medieval times, to worship a religious figure or to protect – in solidarity – the interests of a professional class, respectively. The “new” Confraternities, focused on gastronomic tasks, are a copy of these groups (Beirante, 1990; Dias, 1998; Pentead, 1995; Quitério, 2022).

Confraternity registered in Portugal was the Confraternity of “Gastrónomos do Minho”, created in 1984, but officially published in “Diário da República”¹² in 1986 (Machado, 2004).¹³

The emergence of modern Gastronomic Confraternities predominantly occurred towards the end of the 1980s, within a context influenced by both internal and external factors. Internally, this period was characterised by the opening of Portuguese society to the world following the events of April 25. There was significant social and media mobilisation surrounding gastronomy, marking a flourishing era for events, such as the National Gastronomy Festival of Santarém, established in 1981, as well as the publication of regional and national cookbooks. This period also witnessed a strong advocacy for the “rural”, both domestically and internationally, through the promotion and expansion of tourism in rural areas, the establishment of geographical indications, and phenomena of hyper territorialisation. Furthermore, this era coincided with the resistance against food globalisation, exemplified by the internationally recognised Slow Food movement (Moreira and Tristão, 2019; Sobral, 2007, 2016a, 2017).

3.1.3. Confraternities’ objectives – the defence

José Quitério (1942-), one of the most prominent food critics in Portugal, presented in 1995 the context in which Gastronomic Confraternities were born, in a communication delivered at the 1st National Congress of Gastronomy. Discussing the diversity of Portuguese cuisine, he puts forward his gastronomic nationalist discourse as follows: “(...) we have not known how to study our cuisine, emphasise its specificity, and disseminate it to the old and new barbarians (...)”¹⁴ (Quitério, 1995, p. 27). He also added

“Portuguese regional cuisine is in distressing decline, from north to south, from the coast to the interior. The wave of standardization, (...) the brainwashing that is the formidable campaigns to promote someone else’s and spurious products (...), the widespread and criminal tendency to destroy the cultural heritage, this and the disappearance of the old [female] cooks, guardians of culinary traditions – everything comes together for the ruin and consequent extinction of this very important piece of our country’s culture” (Quitério, 1995, p. 32).¹⁵

Quitério continues the picture with the indication of the increase in the promotion of the “gastronomic personality” or the “gastronomic attractions” of the different Portuguese tourism regions, at a time when the visitor is already “claiming authentic Portuguese food” (Quitério, 1995, p. 32). According to the author, at the time, a) decharacterisation

¹² Portuguese official gazette.

¹³ The emergence of foodcentric associations in Portugal begins in the 19th century with groups such as the “Makavencos” or “Os Vencidos da Vida”, groups of the literary, industrial, military, cultural and political elite of Lisbon that, at the end of the nineteenth century, constituted themselves as “almocarista” (lunching) groups (Quitério, 2022) or “jantantes” (dinner) groups (Grandella, 2010). The first formal registration of an association specifically focused on the defence and promotion of Portuguese gastronomy is with the Portuguese Gastronomy Society, in Lisbon, in 1933, founded by an industrialist, a journalist and writer and a doctor, António Maria de Oliveira Bello, Albino Forjaz de Sampaio and Ernesto Roma, respectively (Gomensoro, 2023).

¹⁴ Portuguese original translation: “(...) não temos sabido estudar a nossa cozinha, acentuar a sua especificidade e divulgá-la aos velhos e novos bárbaros”.

¹⁵ Portuguese original translation: “a cozinha regional portuguesa está em confrangedora decadência, de norte a sul, do litoral ao interior. A onda de estandardização, (...) a lavagem ao cérebro que são as formidáveis campanhas de promoção de produtos alheios e espúrios (...), a generalizada e criminosa tendência para o desbaratar do património cultural, isto e mais o desaparecimento das velhas cozinheiras, guardiãs das tradições culinárias – tudo se congrega para a ruína e consequente extinção deste tão importante naco da cultura do nosso país”.

brought by fast food, which he called “the invasion of the barbarians”, was foreseen (Quitério, 1995, p. 32), b) the “invasion of European Union food items”, c) “The standardisation of world food” and, also, 4) “the standardisation and lowering of the bar of cuisine and taste” (Quitério, 1995, p. 33). For Quitério, gastronomy functioned as an “instrument of colonisation and domination” (Quitério, 1995, p. 33). His thesis ends with a quote exalting gastronomic patriotism, by the romantic writer Fialho de Almeida, stating that “a people that defends its national dishes defends the territory” (Almeida in Quitério, 1995, p. 33).

3.1.4. Confraternal' problematics

L. Cunha (2018) developed one of the most relevant, anthropological and academic synthesis works on the role and practices of the Gastronomic Confraternities in Portugal. Presenting itself as a summary of confraternal practices and ways of thinking about the promotion and appreciation of gastronomy in that context, Cunha problematizes aspects of the daily life of the Confraternity movement such as heritagisation and the interests associated with it (cultural, economic, sociological), the identitarian reactions around global vs. local, the principles of collegiality, ritualisation¹⁶ and epicureanism as central factors in the life of the Confraternities. In this work, the author focuses on the confraternal dichotomy between the practices of heritage rooting and the preservation of ideas of authenticity, genuineness, and ancestry of the defended gastronomic practices versus their permeability in the sense of tourist demand for gastronomy and the economic movements associated with it. Sometimes, adds the authors, the latter are driven by “a mediated and more or less centralised process for commercial, promotional or political reasons” (L. Cunha, 2018, p. 758). The author states that “tourism emerges as a central factor in the mobilisation of gastronomy promoted through the Confraternities” (L. Cunha, 2018, p. 743).¹⁷

The author focuses on the development of the Confraternity movement through a “contagion effect” (Cunha, 2018, p. 742), which is strongly linked to regionalist dynamics, and mainly concentrated in the North of the country. Both the idea of preservation put forward by Cunha and its regional character also seem to be accepted by other authors such as Encarnação when he states that “the revitalization, all over the world, of hundreds of traditional Confraternities (...) are part of this precise desire to preserve identity, as a guarantee of the quality of each regional delicacy” (Encarnação, 2017, p. 193). For Cunha, this movement occurred, above all, after the aforementioned consecration as heritage of Portuguese gastronomy in 2001. However, he also mentions that “the multiplication of the Confraternities changed the scenario of the lack of gastronomic associations, but without organising a space of consensus around the promotion of gastronomy” (L. Cunha, 2018, p. 744). The very emergence of the FPCG within the scope of the functioning of the Portuguese National Commission for Gastronomy is paradigmatic for the author with regard to filling an empty space in the promotion, in the civil spectrum, of Portuguese gastronomy. In short, Cunha says that the Confraternities recruit and permanently mobilise narratives from other knowledge areas, mobilising concepts and values as “those of heritage and authenticity with ideas that stir up the

contemporary debate, such as those of interculturality and hybridisation, [affirming] food (...) as a space of challenge” (L. Cunha, 2018, p. 760).

From the point of view of their interconnection to the agents, Cunha also draws attention to the “instrumentalisation [of the Confraternities] carried out by public and private entities that see gastronomy and those who represent it as a means of tourism and commercial promotion” (Cunha, 2018, p. 742).

One of the criticisms directed at the Confraternities (gastronomic, ethylic, or Bacchic) is the pronounced presence of elements of masculinity, with some being predominantly masculine. However, it is noteworthy that there also exist Confraternities that are exclusively female. André and Cardoso (2019) reports this in a recent ethnographic study of various Portuguese Confraternities, encompassing the entire country.

3.1.5. International settling

Besides the international activities undertaken by Portuguese Gastronomic Confraternities and other official subnational entities, such as City Councils, some Confraternities that promote Portuguese gastronomy have gained worldwide recognition. Recognising the diaspora as a key channel to join efforts on the cultural and gastronomic promotion from beyond the country's borders, this is the example of diasporic Confraternities such as “Confraria Gastronómica dos Sabores Portugueses” and the “Confraria da Sardinha Portuguesa” in Luxembourg, as well as the Confraria Grão Vasco in Switzerland. These organisations are already established abroad, from where they operate and promote Portuguese culture.

3.2. Results from the survey

A total of 227 responses were collected, of which 222 were deemed valid. Five responses were excluded due to the respondents' affiliations with Bacchic and ethylic Confraternities (three responses) and because they did not belong to any Confraternity (two responses). The 222 valid responses represent a total of 88 Portuguese Gastronomic Confraternities, providing a robust and wide-ranging snapshot of the movement's diverse realities across the country.

3.3. Sociodemographic aspects

Out of 222 valid responses, 81 respondents (36.5 %) identified as female, while 141 respondents (63.5 %) identified as male. The mean age of the respondents is 56.5 years, with a standard deviation of ± 11.5 years. The distribution of the respondents' educational qualifications is illustrated in Fig. 2, which indicates that the majority of respondents possess a bachelor's degree.

Fig. 3 indicates a concentration of respondents' residence location in the northern coastal area of mainland Portugal, although the highest concentrations of respondents are observed in Odivelas ($n = 19$, 8.6 %), Braga ($n = 13$, 5.9 %), Lisbon ($n = 9$, 4.1 %), and Viseu ($n = 9$, 4.1 %). Regarding employment status, the majority of respondents are in active, dependent employment ($n = 129$, 58.1 %) (Fig. 4).

3.4. Relationship with the confraternity

The vast majority of respondents ($n = 160$, 72.1 %) joined their Confraternity within the last 10 years or less, with 69 (31.1 %) stating that they joined between 2022 and 2024 (Fig. 5). On the other hand, Fig. 6 indicates a heterogeneity in the respondents' access to Confraternities, according to the reported gender, at least until 2013.

Joining motivations are primarily driven by the defence of the confraternal objective, as indicated by 94.6 % of respondents ($n = 210$) (Fig. 7). Nevertheless, considering the option for multiple selections, the motivations “To defend the dish/product/region/activity held by the Confraternity”, “For the conviviality with fellow ‘Confrades’ (Members)” and “To travel and get to know other Confraternities” comprised

¹⁶ Regarding ritualization, Encarnação transcribes a precept about a product defended by a Confraternity that states that “[The defended product] gains a certain form of coat of arms and virtuosity of a symbol that links in this framework of rituality that embodies these matrix solidarity bodies that are the Gastronomic Confraternities” (Encarnação, 2017, p. 199).

¹⁷ Both visions reported in L. Cunha (2018) are also reported by other authors. The role of heritage construction and dissemination of the Cereja do Fundão is accompanied by Forte (2013) and, in the case of bread, by Tinoco (2012). The vision of tourism and promotion of the territory is followed by other authors, such as Barroco and Augusto (2016) for the case of gastronomic assets convertible into tourist assets in the Dão-Lafões region and for the vision of S. Cunha (2016) about the impact of the *Pastel de Tentúgal* and the Confraternity that defends it in attracting visitors to Tentúgal (Montemor-o-Velho, Coimbra).

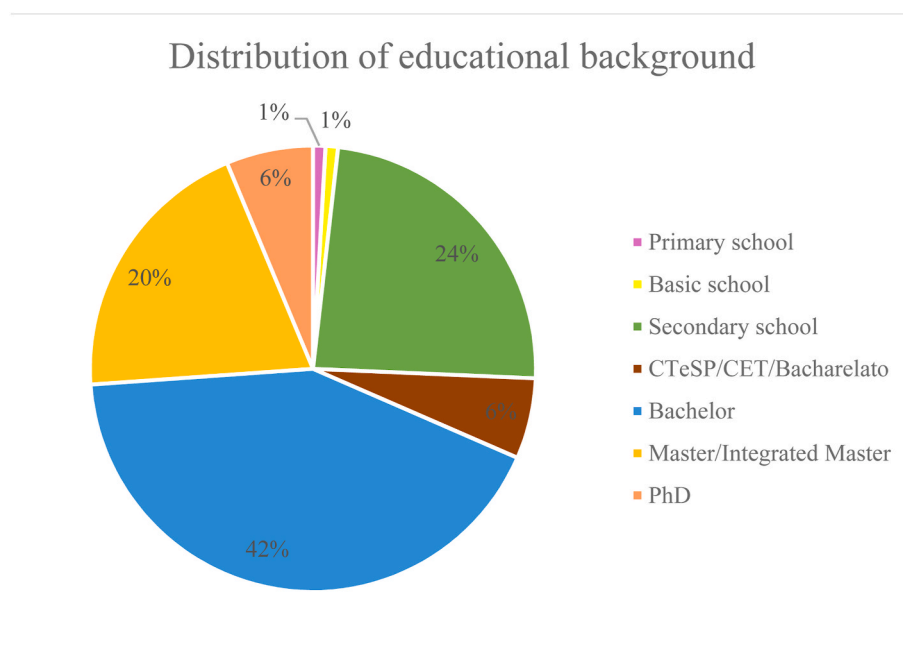


Fig. 2. Distribution of respondents' educational backgrounds.
Source: Authors' elaboration.

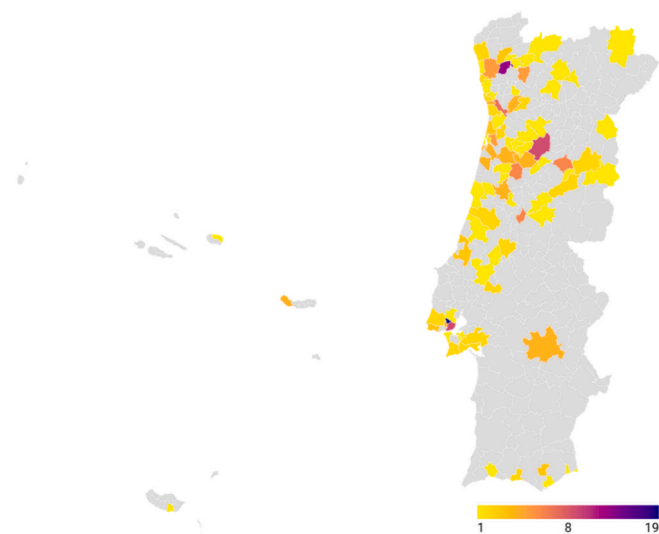


Fig. 3. Distribution of respondents' local of residence.
Source: Author's elaboration. Credits: datawrapper.de

the three most significant aggregations of motivations, accounting for 73.0 % of responses ($n = 162$).

Regarding the joining method (Table 1),¹⁸ the majority of respondents ($n = 108$, 48.6 %) indicated that other Members had invited them to join the Confraternity. However, Membership through the founding of the Confraternity is also notably significant ($n = 78$, 35.1 %). Fig. 8 illustrates the frequency of members' participation. Individual involvement with Confraternity activities occurs predominantly once per quarter ($n = 62$, 27.9 %). Eight respondents (3.6 %) claim to participate daily in Confraternity activities, and 15 (6.8 %) at least once a week.

3.5. Confraternities – location and functioning

The majority of the reported Confraternities' headquarters are located in the North of Portugal (Fig. 9). The most represented counties in the survey are Odivelas (pertaining to “Confraria da Marmelada Branca de Odivelas”, $n = 20$, 9.0 %), Braga (Confraria “BAFA” and “CESTAM”,¹⁹ $n = 17$, 7.7 %), Mortágua (“Confraria da Lampantana”, $n = 13$, 5.9 %), and Pedrógão Grande (“Confraria Gastronómica do Bucho Recheado de Pedrógão Grande”, $n = 11$, 5.0 %).

The majority of respondents indicated that their Confraternity represents a singular product, with 75 individuals (33.8 %) asserting that it defends “only one dish, one product, or one recipe.” In contrast, 44 respondents (19.8 %) reported that their Confraternities advocate for “various dishes/products and/or wines.” Additionally, 30 respondents (13.5 %) stated that their Confraternities promote “a gastronomic region.” The remaining responses were associated with multiple selections from the aforementioned options. There are numerous instances of Confraternities where Members exhibit a heterogeneous perspective regarding the scope of their Confraternity's objectives.

Using a Likert scale comprising five values, respondents were invited to express their level of agreement or disagreement with statements on various dimensions of the confraternal realm, with 1 indicating “totally disagree” and 5 denoting “totally agree.” The results are presented in Table 2²⁰.

3.6. Participation and gastronomic promotion

Participation in activities to promote the Confraternity was analysed according to the geographical level of such participation (see Fig. 10). The majority engaged in promotional activities within a district other than that of their Confraternity's headquarters ($n = 164$, 32 %), while a similarly significant number participated in activities within the same municipality as the headquarters ($n = 161$, 31 %). Additionally, 55

¹⁹ Meaning “BAFA – Bracara Augusta Fidelis et Antiqua Confraria dos Sabores e Tradições Gastronómicas de Braga” and “CESTAM – Confraria Enogastronómica dos Sabores, Tradições e Artes Minhotas”.

²⁰ See Note 18.

¹⁸ See Appendix 2 – Tables.

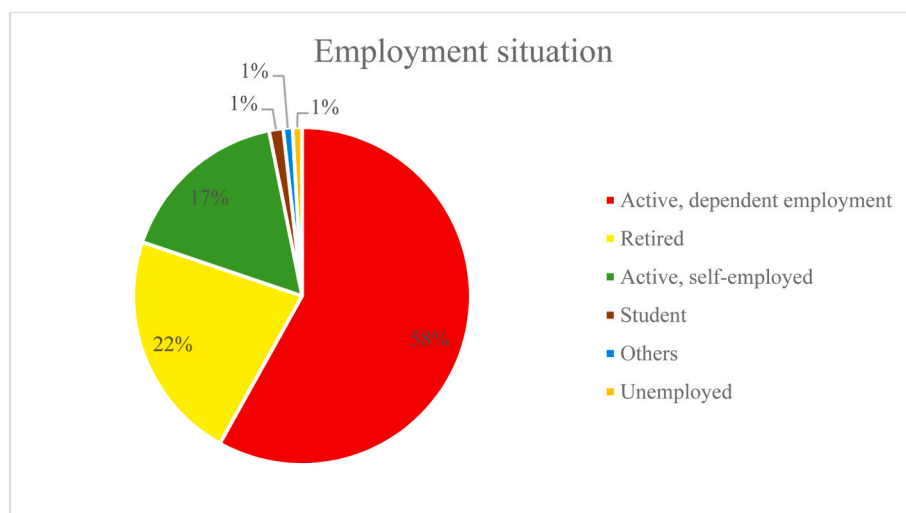


Fig. 4. Respondents' employment situation.

Source: Authors' elaboration.

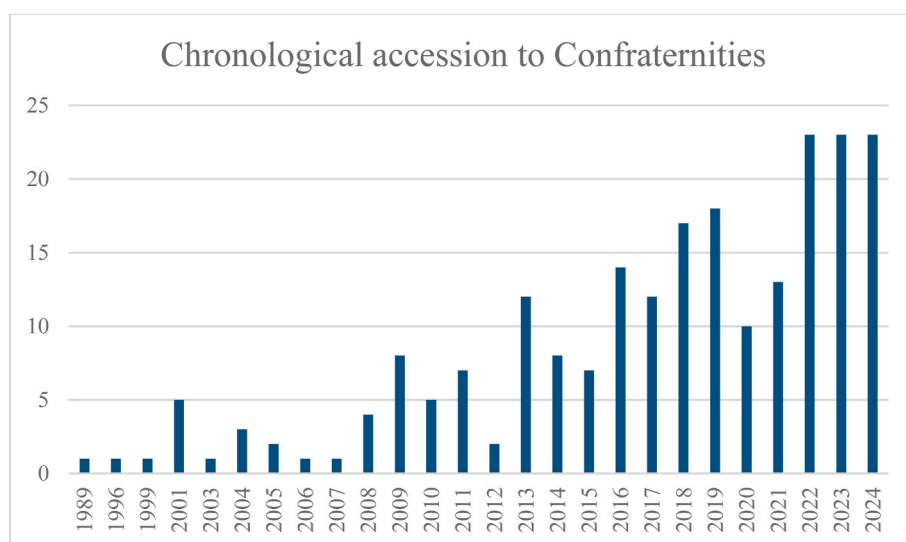


Fig. 5. Chronological accession to Confraternities.

Source: Authors' elaboration

Members (10 %) reported having represented their Confraternity in international contexts.

Regarding the actions of Confraternities, a total of 121 respondents (54.5 %) indicated that they have participated in internal clarification sessions concerning the products endorsed by the Confraternities. Conversely, concerning the participation in promotional activities abroad, 141 respondents (63.5 %) reported that they had never taken part in such initiatives.

The types of promotional activities in which the respondents participated, both in Portugal and abroad, are illustrated in Fig. 11. In Portugal, notable activities included attending other Chapters (n = 197, 88.7 %) and participating in festivals that involved the preparation of delicacies representative of the Confraternity (n = 144, 64.9 %). Abroad, the most frequent answers pertained to participation in other Confraternities' Chapters (n = 45, 20.3 %), attendance at fairs and events (n = 39, 17.6 %), and preparation of endorsed delicacies for gastronomic events (n = 27, 12.2 %).

According to Fig. 12, there is a tendency for the Members to assume the overwhelming majority of the costs of travel, accommodation and

meals whenever participating in promotional actions, both in Portugal and abroad. Regarding the souvenirs, they are usually borne by the Confraternities. In participation abroad, there is a greater involvement of the Confraternities and Municipalities in the cost of travel, even if in a residual manner.

According to Fig. 13, most Members begin and finish the representation activities on the same day (n = 141, 63.5 %). However, 26.1 % of the Members (n = 58) claim to stay one night or more at the destination.

Subsequently, the respondents were asked to order seven Confraternities' missions, in order of importance, from 1 to 7, with 1 being the "most important" and 7 the "least important". Results are shown in Table 3.²¹

Regarding what the respondents consider a model Confraternity in the performance of their functions, the nominative answers stand out in the content analysis, where about three dozen Confraternities were named as model Confraternities, highlighting the "Confraria

²¹ See Note 18.

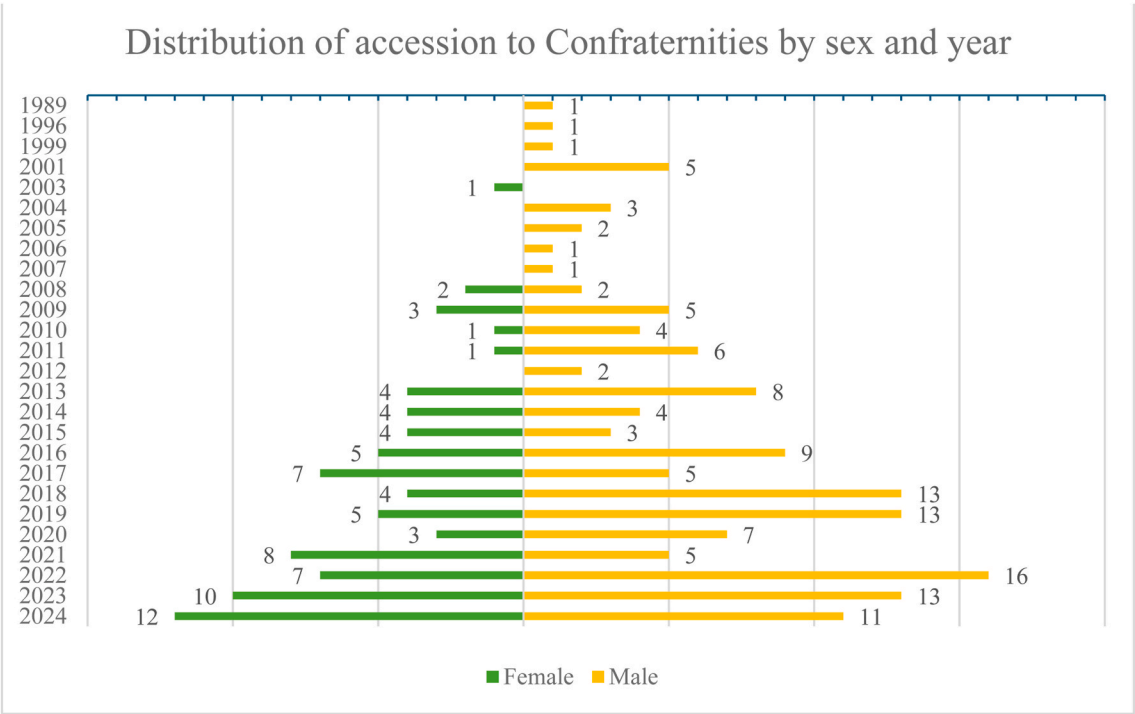


Fig. 6. Distribution of respondents’ accession to Confraternities, by sex and year.
Source: Authors’ elaboration.

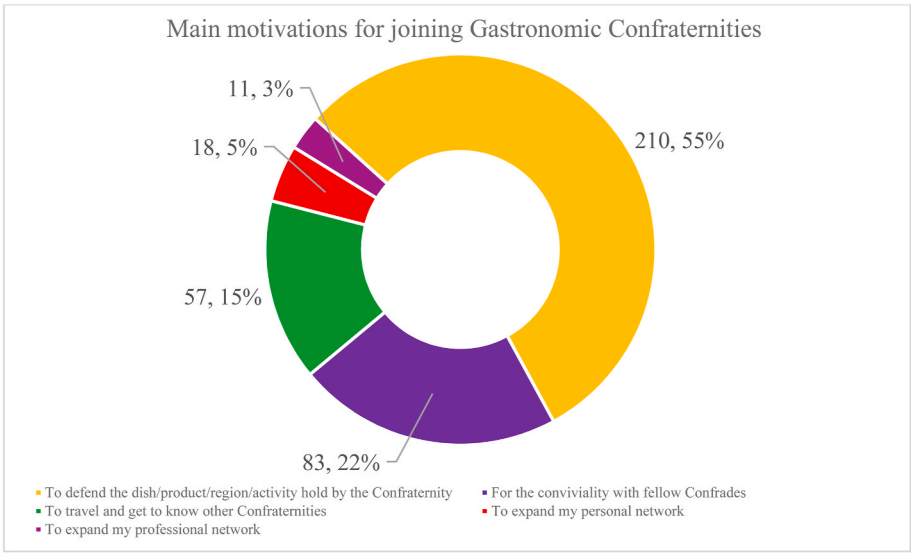


Fig. 7. Motivations for joining Gastronomic Confraternities.
Source: Authors’ elaboration.

Gastronómica da Almeirim”, as the most mentioned (7 times), the “Confraria do Queijo Serra da Estrela” (2), the “Confraria do Anho Assado com Arroz de Forno” (2) and the “Confraria do Atum” (2). In the aspects related to the Confraternities, the answers were organised according to the ends/purposes, mechanisms, agents and frequency of the Confraternities, as summarised in Table 4.²²

Regarding promotion mechanisms and spaces, respondents consider confraternal gastronomic promotion in a public space (n = 31, 14.0 %) to be more effective than in a private environment (n = 22, 10 %).

According to Table 5,²³ the narrative and explanation (n = 103, 46.4 %), the tasting of the promoted products (n = 76, 34.2 %) and the invitation to visit the region (n = 30, 13.5 %) are the three most mentioned techniques for creating familiarity with the confraternal object. Regarding channels, fairs and gastronomic events (n = 26, 11.7 %), activities in schools (n = 3, 1.4 %), and social media (n = 3, 1.4 %) are the channels mentioned for confraternal missions.

²² See Note 18.

²³ See Note 18.

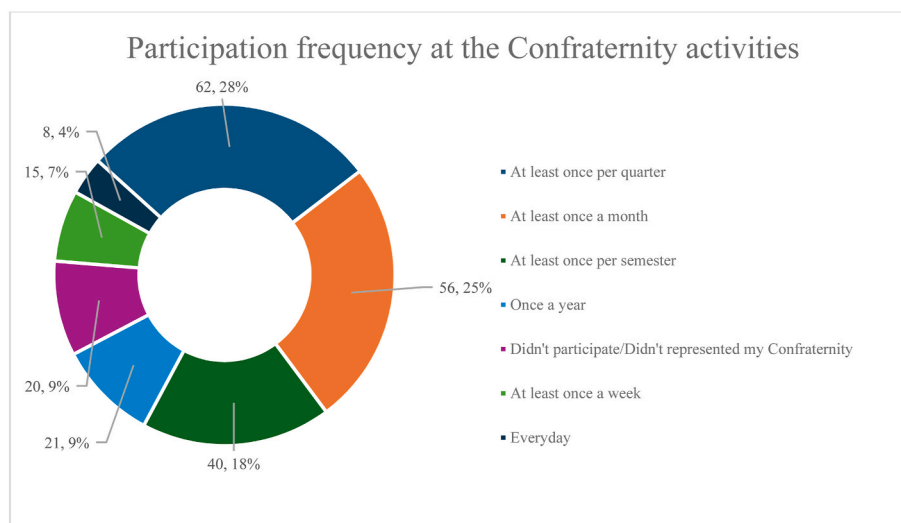


Fig. 8. Participation in Confraternities' activities.
Source: Authors' elaboration.

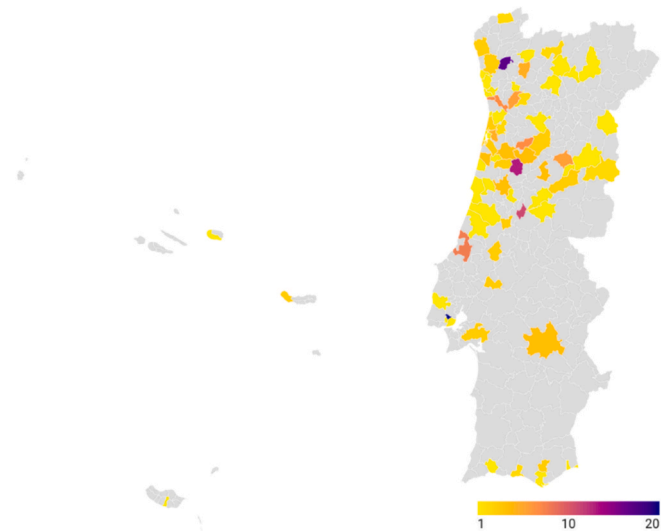


Fig. 9. Distribution of Confraternities' headquarters.
Source: Authors' elaboration. Credits: datawrapper.de

3.7. Relationship with agents

Through a Likert scale of 5 values (in which 1 was “not important” and 5 “very important”) and the calculation of the arithmetic mean of each answer the respondents were asked about the need to maintain good relations with the agents (and with which agents) in order to the healthful continuity of the promotion of their Confraternal object. Tourist Entities, Culinary and/or gastronomic individualities, and the Mayor were identified as the Top 3 most relevant entities, according to Table 6.²⁴

3.8. Content analysis – concerns, tensions and problems

Based on the content analysis, the themes that stand out in the open-ended questions are available in Table 7.²⁵ They reflect the most salient

and frequently discussed aspects by the respondents in the context of evaluating the functioning of the gastronomic Confraternities. They highlight both their merits and the challenges and areas that need improvement.

In descending order of mentions, the preservation of tradition, authenticity, and cultural identity are identified as key sources of gastronomic promotion, which is the primary mission of the Confraternities (“they are important for the dissemination of tradition” – ID 94; “one should be concerned primarily with preserving authenticity” – ID 172; “Confraternities play a fundamental role in preserving the cultural identity of a region, its people, and the products they represent, especially in the promotion of gastronomy” – ID 90).

However, respondents call for a greater focus on product advocacy, the creation of objective and straightforward promotional tools with quality content, and broader multilevel promotion at local, national, and international levels (IDs 84, 101, 114, ...). They express concerns about the behaviour of Members, particularly those who do not understand the meaning of the costume or insignia they wear (IDs 1, 95, 168) or who use the Confraternity for personal and social promotion (IDs 1, 5, 6, 80, 95, ...). Additionally, concerns are raised about the multiple affiliations of the Members with different Confraternities (including participation in diverse Confraternity boards), a lack of knowledge or interest in the Confraternity's mission, and the ageing of the Members (IDs 51, 63, 213, 216, ...). Rivalry between Confraternities is also noted (IDs 88, 200).

On the other hand, concerning events, respondents assert that the Chapters have become banquets, parties, and “eating and drinking clubs” (“it is still ingrained in some Members of certain Confraternities that being a confrere is merely about eating and drinking” – ID 113), rather than events aimed at promoting confraternal objects (IDs 46, 83, 107, 201). Some express concern about the high costs associated with the Chapters (IDs 79, 102, 112, 150) and the lack of emphasis on local gastronomy at these events (“there are Confraternities that, on the day of their Chapter, instead of promoting local cuisine, serve snacks and fried foods for breakfast, neglecting the local gastronomic heritage” – ID 113). Respondents also report a preference for participating in events open to the public rather than solely for confraternal Members (IDs 18, 23, 75). The need for reorganising communication amid current turmoil (IDs 184, 220), achieving a balance between male and female Members and younger and older participants (IDs 23, 164, 140, 213), and addressing the archaic and elitist image that distances people from the Confraternities (IDs 94, 136, 189, 213, ...) are highlighted as areas for rethinking confraternal activity in Portugal.

The issue of support and financing for Confraternities is discussed,

²⁴ See Note 18.

²⁵ See Note 18.

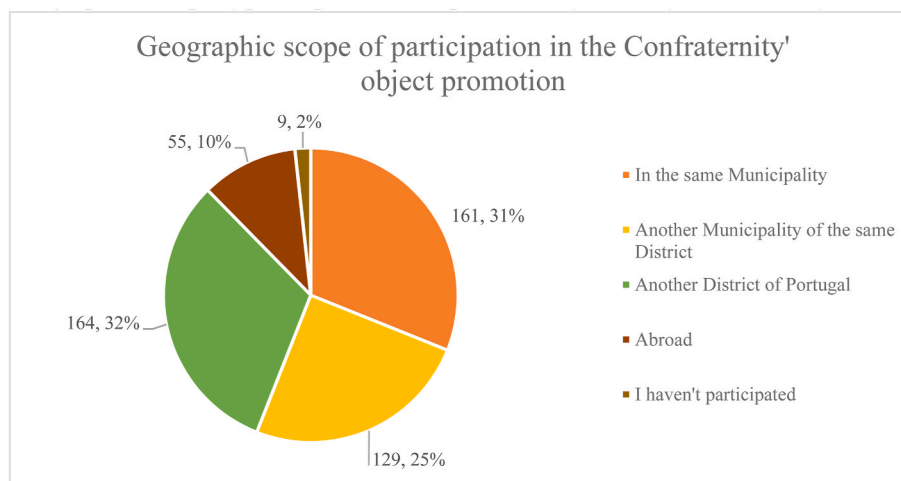


Fig. 10. Geographical scope of participation in the promotion of the Confraternities' object.
Source: Authors' elaboration.

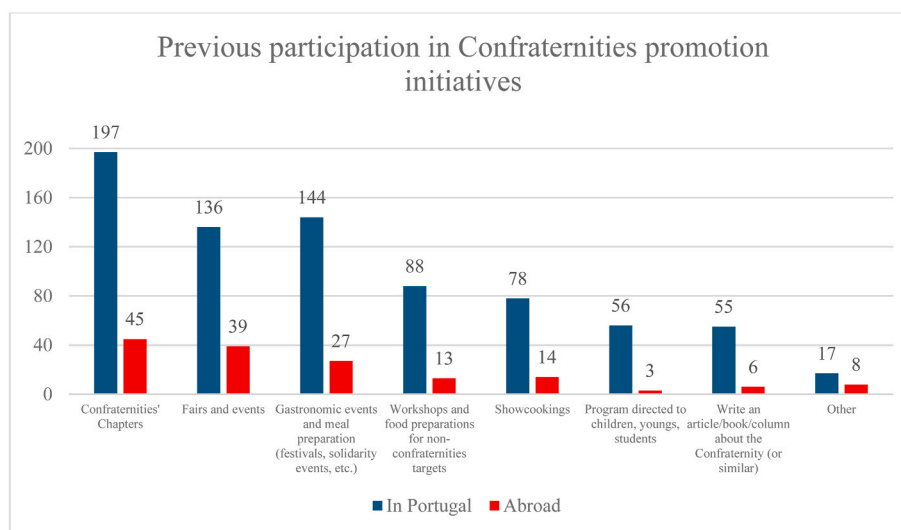


Fig. 11. Participation in promotional activities in Portugal and abroad.
Source: Authors' elaboration.

highlighting its scarcity, particularly in relation to public and private entities (especially City Councils) (IDs 103, 136, 156, 165, ...). Respondents reflect on the influence of political or financial interests on the Confraternities (IDs 13, 112, 136). The support from public entities is limited in the shared effort to promote the territory, indicating that Members bear a significant portion of their participation costs (IDs 102, 122, 200, ...). However, respondents advocate for openness to establishing partnerships with parish councils, hotels, and restaurants, especially at the local level, to promote tourism (IDs 21, 46, 81, 138, 220, ...).

FPCG is criticised for its inability to regulate, promote, assist, and unite the Confraternities, focusing their development on an agenda linked to the interests of their leaders (IDs 5, 10, 24, 45, ...).

Lastly, the connection to scientific research and academia is also presented as a legitimate source of Confraternities' actions (IDs 61, 95, 189, 207, ...).

3.9. Aspects of confraternities' internationalisation

The responses indicate that internationalisation is already a reality for certain Confraternities, highlighting an awareness of the significance

of promoting gastronomy. The internationalisation of Confraternities' work and its promotional objectives is approached from various perspectives. The first perspective pertains to Membership in international federative bodies, such as CEUCO; however, confidence in this mode of internationalisation has generated some criticism due to its perceived ineffectiveness (IDs 3, 45, 104, 133, 180, ...), with suggestions for the creation of a European Federation (ID 62). Conversely, the twinning of practices with international Confraternities, including those located in Luxembourg, Spain, and Macau, is reported as a means of promoting Portuguese confraternal objectives internationally (IDs 3, 55). Additionally, the internal mobilisation of Confraternities, some of which have an agenda for promotion "across borders", is noted in the surveys. Finally, the survey highlights the practice of certifying restaurants "throughout Europe" organised by the "Confraria Gastronómica de Almeirim" (ID 59). The use of communication technology (videos, social media, workshops) (IDs 104, 113, 115, ...) for dissemination "out of doors (outside the city where one resides), from a national and international perspective" (ID 221) is regarded as a means to digitally engage gastronomic tourists who seek Portuguese gastronomy.

The establishment of agreements by the FPCG to promote national delicacies with the diaspora and international tourism companies is

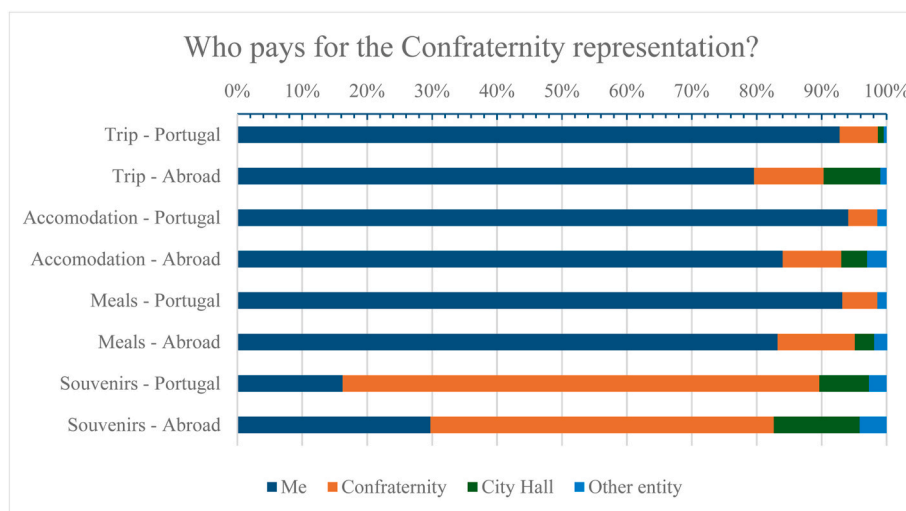


Fig. 12. Participation expenses supported by Members (Portugal and abroad).
Source: Authors' elaboration.

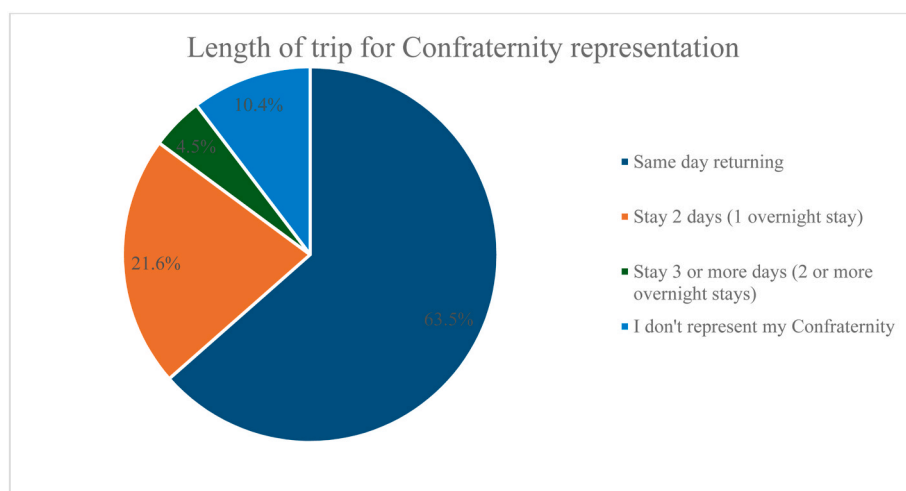


Fig. 13. Trip length for Confraternity representation.
Source: Authors' elaboration.

suggested, potentially through a partnership with Tourism of Portugal (ID 130), with campaigns recommended at both national and international levels to attract gastronomy tourism to Portuguese regions (IDs 59, 80, 175, ...). Thus, the importance of Confraternities in aggregating entities is emphasised.

4. Discussion

4.1. Confraternal roles and problems

Although the data obtained cannot be statistically generalised, it provides insights into the Portuguese Confraternity movement regarding its practices, perceptions, configurations, and internationalisation. Their role in promoting Portuguese gastronomic heritage, both nationally and internationally, is fundamental, as recognised by Dalila Rodrigues, the Minister of Culture of Portugal (2024–2025). The Minister recently referred to Portuguese gastronomic heritage as “a living expression of national culture and an essential pillar of our collective identity”, acknowledging the mission of the Gastronomic Confraternities as vital in the “preservation of a heritage that is both material and immaterial” and that “transcends the safeguarding of traditions, positioning itself as a

bridge that connects local communities to their rich cultural heritage, often relegated to the background in cultural dynamics at the national level” (Rodrigues, 2024).

Departing from the Minister's words, one of the first discussions that should be highlighted concerns the diplomatic activities of NGOs (such as Gastronomic Confraternities) and the implications of their theoretical framing. Are these activities best understood through the lens of Track II diplomacy or paradiplomacy? What conceptual boundaries exist when NGOs establish agenda relationships with subnational official entities and are primarily financed or politically supported by such entities (e.g., municipalities for Confraternities)? As per the evidence, Gastronomic Confraternities should be regarded as full-fledged paradiplomatic actors and not simply cultural lobbyists. Nevertheless, as stated below, the relationship between these organisations and municipalities presents a complex scenario.

On one hand, underfunding is acknowledged in our results, while on the other hand, the politicisation of the confraternal movement is regarded as inappropriate (“[Confraternities] must remain as politically exempt associations and independent of other structures, namely local authorities” – ID 13 and “(...) right now we have a bit of a politicized vanity fair, everyone wants power, protagonism, and mixes politics with

gastronomy” – ID 136).

Based on the bibliographic analysis, some concerns expressed by the authors are reflected in our results. Given that respondents have, on average, been in their Confraternities for 8 years, their answers highlight issues related to functioning and belonging, such as masculinity and the inclusion of women, which varied in our sample, particularly until 2013 (Fig. 6), as well as the ageing of the movement, “clubism”, and elitism.

4.2. Heritage defence?

Quitério’s statement about the need to defend Portuguese gastronomy in the face of the hypothesis of cultural erasure, as a result of globalisation, seems to be sympathetic to the opinions of the respondents.

It is ascertained that the need for “defence” is only generated in situations of imminent attacks or threats. This fear triggers calls on reactions and mental frameworks that result in the staticity and immutability of cultural objects.

These reactions are already known for a long time and created, especially in moments of politicisation and appeal to national unity under a “collective idea of organising the Portuguese around Portuguese things” (Ramos, 1993, p. 39). Examples of this are those related to Napoleonic invasions (1807–1810), the liberal wars (1828–1834), the English ultimatum (1890) and, in the 20th century, World War I (1914–1918), the 1929 crisis, the colonial disputes and wars, among others (Ramos, 1993). These moments have contributed to the construction of places of memory and topics of collective belonging, mythified, mythifying and essentializing (Cadavez, 2013). Subsisting in time and increased by the regionalist apology as a legitimising source of human action during the “Estado Novo” regime (Sobral, 2008), one can understand this appeal for fixity and immutability as an identitarian demand for the repudiation of change towards food aspects. Specifically, those coming from a popular culture and that help in the apology of the *long Portuguese tradition*, as mechanisms of comfort and legitimacy creation and emotional securitisation, based on food, and disseminated greatly in artistic movements, but not exclusively, such as the romantic literature of the 19th century (Sobral, 2007; Torgal and Roque, 1993).

All these assumptions are applied here to the Confraternity object. Defending, preserving, maintaining, not losing authenticity, genuineness, as found in the results, are examples of these identity reactions that arise in relation to the Confraternity object and to the Portuguese gastronomy. These arise after the promotion and dissemination concerns (Table 4), with the preservation of the memories of flavours being the most widely agreed-upon statement regarding the mission of the Confraternities (Table 2). It is reported, in fact, that this is the primary function of the Confraternities (Table 3²⁶). The remaining Confraternities’ functions are ranked below these concerns. Nevertheless, there are numerous references in the same answer that point to a dichotomy between the preservation and innovation of the defended product, with this duality not being perceived as mutually exclusive. Some reinventions of the Confraternity object are also demanded.

4.3. Internal dynamics and the “leisure” challenge

Members’ involvement with Confraternities seems to follow an individual “contagion” process, as most respondents were invited by other Members to join. However, if 48 % of the respondents participate in Confraternity activities at least once a month (and possibly more often), the truth is that 52 % participate less frequently. These data, along with the expressive information obtained concerning the analysed length of stay, the concerns surrounding ageing within Confraternities, and potentially the recorded average age, may position Confraternities as activities characterised by idleness and leisure. The hypothesis, in a way,

of an establishment of Confraternal tourism (“Confraternities as holidays for the elderly” – ID 136), associated with the representation of Confraternities, should not be overlooked as they are a reality in the respondents’ universe. This fact may present specific challenges in transitioning away from an amateur promotion of the Confraternities’ object.

From the perspective of the Confraternities, there is an opportunity to reinforce internal sessions on the defended object, given that 45.5 % of respondents did not attend an internal clarification session on the Confraternities’ aim, scope or features. This may lead to disparities in the understanding of the promotional object and the Confraternity’s course of action among Members, including those of the same Confraternity (as noted by respondents). The Chapters and other events are central to Confraternity life, but their current format generates significant criticism and recommendations. They are often described as “banquets” (ID 83), parties, or mere moments of conviviality, with little or no effective promotion of products or local cultures. The high cost of participation in the Chapters, for both Members and the Confraternities that cover expenses, is a reported factor that limits participation and deters people. Besides, the celebration of masses prior to Chapters further reflects the enduring symbolic alignment with Catholic brotherhoods, their original framework, pointing to an anchoring movement of confraternal identity in ecclesiastical frameworks.

4.4. Tensions between preservation vs. innovation: museification and folklorisation risks

At the same time, although some answers indicate a transformation of confraternal objects, embracing innovation and transpiring cultural porosity in response to new contexts and challenges, such as changes in consumption habits, others suggest the idea of museification, as well as the reinvention of tradition and the folklorisation of the Confraternity movement. This is evident in statements such as “Innovating products in order to promote without losing their authenticity” (ID 86), “defends traditions (...) and accepts innovation without distorting tradition” (ID 95), “seeking to innovate the gastronomy of its region without losing its roots” (ID 46), and this explicit comment on what is considered a model Confraternity: “[it] knows how to preserve the ancient art of gastronomy while promoting innovation to reinvent traditions” (ID 51).

It is requested that there should be “less folklore” (ID 61). Folklorisation, adapted here to gastronomy from the perspective of Castelo-Branco and Branco (2003), is defined as “the process of construction and institutionalisation of performative practices considered traditional, composed of fragments taken from popular culture, usually rural. The objective is to represent the tradition of a locality, a region, or the nation” (Castelo-Branco and Branco, 2003, p. 1). Besides, Hobsbawm’s concept of the invention of tradition is found in the survey’s answer. As a set of invariant practices of a ritualistic or symbolic nature, generally regulated by tacit or openly accepted rules, traditions aim to inculcate specific values and norms of behaviour through repetition. This is not necessarily a continuity with the past, especially when that continuity is explicitly constructed or invented (as according to survey respondents), with its basis originating in the present, with some interpreted and reinvented topics of memory that belong to the past but are built in the present (Hobsbawm, 2012; Menezes, 2010). This is particularly true as many circumstances and legitimising configurations of these rituals that inform the “tradition” may no longer be present due to changes in lifestyles (Giddens, 2013).

In this sense, it is also important to note that many aspects of individual Members’ performance overlap with the confraternal object. This is the case of narratives and clothing (as evidenced by Tables 2 and 5²⁷). These overlaps are legitimised and justified by identitarian singularisation needs (from other Confraternities and gastronomic products

²⁶ See Note 18.

²⁷ See Note 18.

from different regions, with the concept of *region* in its parochial sense being particularly relevant here). The risk of values, meanings, and mental representations and appropriations in the creation of traditions, which impact the Confraternities' message, is evident in the forms and channels chosen for national and international promotion. The simple mimicry of religious fraternal practices for gastronomic promotion, for instance, through collegiality, exemplifies this.

Creating alliances with academia and using research, as well as inventoring both tangible and intangible heritage and formally recording it, are measures that Confraternities can adopt to prevent artificial promotion actions. The reported "festival" and the mere or apparent familiarity creation mechanisms, without meaning and real foundational support, should be questioned.

4.5. National and international gastronomic promotion

Regarding promotional activities, while there is a significant participation in national events, international involvement is smaller (36.5 %). This situation appears to remain unchanged. In the analysis of the magazines published by the FPCG (a promotional channel itself) "Gastronomias", "Nona Arte" and "Confraria",²⁸ the Confraternities presence in an international environment is essentially linked to a) promotion of internal events of the Confraternities abroad, such as the Chapter ceremony of the "Confraria Grão Vasco", held in Rio de Janeiro in 2024, b) participation in Chapters and events of foreign Confraternities, c) establishment of affiliations with international organisations, d) twinning, exchanges and protocols with international Confraternities, e) collaborative promotion actions,²⁹ f) Diplomatic actions, such as the reception and preparation of a Confraternities' dinner at the residence of the Ambassador of Portugal in Luxembourg in October 2024, g) efforts to establish an International Federation. Notwithstanding, the mere participation in Chapters of other Confraternities (nationally and internationally), also echoed in our research, is questioned regarding its effectiveness in the gastronomic promotion strategy of the Confraternities, collecting the idea of openness to civil society as support in the respondents and pointing to public events and other channels and techniques beyond the narrative and tasting of the products defended (Table 5³⁰). In absolute terms, although international participation is small, it does exist and occurs in various forms. However, this low participation can be explained by the fact that, both in Portugal and abroad, the support of travel, accommodation and food expenses is overwhelmingly borne by the Members. We understand that the financing needs presented and arising from public entities that share the communication and promotion of the same confraternal object and the same territory may be associated with this need to support expenses for their international leverage. In any case, we question whether the aforementioned leisure practices are already so institutionalised that they are reflected in this individual's assumption of expenses.

Regarding the object of promotion, the data also present a latent dichotomy regarding the functions of the Confraternities and what the respondents consider a model Confraternity, which has an impact,

absolutely, on the idea of gastronomic promotion. Although the respondents never presented it as a contradiction, but as a need for balance, 26 respondents reported in the open question the need to respect tradition and the immutability of the confraternal object, while accepting the modernisation of their dishes, as we exemplified.

Knowing the importance of narrative as a technique for gastronomic promotion (Table 5³¹) the risks associated with the *mise en scène* intentions or the prevalence of transformative practices in the object of exhibition or staging, originating from an idea of fixity, can result in a cultural artifice and lead – in the end – to low cultural/tourist consumption of the promoted object (Ruy and Almeida, 2020) and not contributing to the desired attraction of benefits aimed at promoting the confraternal object or any place branding strategy.

4.6. Stakeholders' relations and paradiplomacy

From the perspective of tourism, knowing that tourist attraction appears as the fourth concern in Table 3, the ninth concern in Table 4, and the third strategy in Tables 5 and it is the least relevant identification sector in Table 2³² (behind Economy and Culture), the need for good relationships with tourism entities ranks first among the priorities for good relationships with other stakeholders (Table 6). Furthermore, a good relationship with culinary and/or gastronomic individualities seems to be more important to respondents than territorial relationships, such as a good relationship with the mayor, which comes in third place. This fact requires further study, as the hypothesis suggests that culinary individualities could be sources of legitimacy. The promotion strategies and channels appear similar to those used by other stakeholders in territorial promotion, such as City Councils, highlighting the need for networking in the promotion of destinations and gastronomic culture, and the potential for including Gastronomic Confraternities in broader gastrodiploacy policies. Ultimately, it is essential to assess reality: given all the configurations, and particularly in scenarios of international promotion, are the Confraternities paradiplomatic actors or actors with paradiplomatic potential?

5. Conclusion

This study shows that Confraternities play a fundamental role in promoting Portuguese gastronomic assets, acting as curators of the national gastronomic culture. The significant strength of this study lies in its breadth, having accessed Members from 88 distinct Confraternities. This wide scope lends considerable credibility to the findings, ensuring they reflect a comprehensive overview of the movement rather than the perspective of just a few isolated groups.

Despite their heterogeneity and the complexity of relationships within the movement, their capacity for cultural promotion extends from organising events and gastronomic meetings to participating in fairs and festivals, both in Portugal and abroad, thus having a paradiplomatic role. The Confraternity movement faces challenges and contradictions that warrant reflection, particularly regarding the Members' own knowledge of the products they promote, the processes of heritagisation, the structure and purpose of Chapters, strengthening gastronomic promotion, and engaging with civil society. Additionally, the tension between preserving tradition and the need for innovation, alongside concerns about elitism, the ageing of Members, financing activities beyond individual contributions, and the effectiveness of promotion strategies, are aspects that require not only deeper exploration but also more debate.

From a promotional perspective, there is an opportunity to enhance promotion mechanisms, starting with the narratives as one of the most common technique in Confraternities' work. Exploring and creating

²⁸ In terms of Confraternities' internationalisation, the paradiplomatic practices of the Confraternities were also analysed through the magazines published by the Portuguese Federation of Gastronomic Confraternities. The magazines "Gastronomias" (2007–2011 and 2013, 20 issues, finished, available at the National Library of Portugal, ref. 641/642(05)), "Nona Arte" (2013–2019, finished, available at <https://fpcggeral.wixsite.com/fpcg/services> [access on May 20th, 2025]) and "Confraria" (2024, ongoing, 2 issues).

²⁹ E.g. between the "Confraria dos Gastrónomos do Algarve" and the School of Hospitality and Tourism of Macau; the partnership of the "Confraria da Fogaça da Feira" and the "Confraria da Raça Arouquesa" with TAP Air Portugal for the broadcasting of promotional videos on board the planes; or the articulation of the "Confraria do Bodo", AICEP and the Municipality of Pombal for the internationalisation of products.

³⁰ See Note 18.

³¹ See Note 18.

³² See Note 18.

bridges with academia and research, as well as establishing (or strengthening) formal and informal processes for recording and safeguarding heritage, would help strengthen Confraternities' legitimacy. Additionally, more structured mechanisms would lead to a deeper degree of familiarity creation. Conversely, the messages, channels, forms, and topics used by Confraternity Members are highly influenced by interpretations of gastronomic traditions, which are shaped by individual identitarian responses due to intrinsic and extrinsic factors, such as memories of food comfort or globalisation, rather than by the Confraternity's orientation. This has an unknown impact on internal and external communication, as well as on the place branding strategies employed by the Confraternities. Also, it presents an opportunity for internal realignment and communication reengineering, for example, through the enhancement of clarification sessions on the defended object. Moreover, further studies are deemed necessary to understand these vectors from an external perspective.

In this context, identifying and delineating their roles as agents with paradiplomatic capacity – specifically, the ability to transport and disseminate aspects of their territory within an internationally projected place branding policy – positions these Associations as exemplary partners for designing and implementing gastrodiploacy strategies, particularly due to their capillarity and stakeholders' relationships. However, this capacity also entails responsibilities, notably the need for risk mitigation regarding folklorisation, stereotyping, museification, essentialization, the cannibalisation of cultural objects, and overly sterile outcomes from insular activities within the Movement, which may become disconnected from civil society.

For the territories, the Confraternities show significant potential to contribute to local and regional development, enhance gastronomic tourism, and strengthen the international profile of Portuguese gastronomy. To achieve this, they must adapt to the new contexts and challenges posed by integration into a global society.

In short, the Portuguese Gastronomic Confraternities are a valuable asset for disseminating Portuguese gastronomy and culture, as well as the Portuguese people' gastronomic identity, through public diplomacy and Track II diplomacy mechanisms.

CRedit authorship contribution statement

Ó. Cabral: Writing – original draft, Software, Resources, Project administration, Methodology, Investigation, Funding acquisition, Formal analysis, Conceptualisation. **L. Lavrador:** Validation, Supervision, Conceptualisation. **P. Orduna:** Writing – review & editing, Validation, Supervision, Conceptualisation. **R. Moreira:** Writing – review & editing, Validation, Supervision, Methodology, Conceptualisation.

Limitations

Acknowledging that the number of respondents limits the generalisation of the results to the Confraternity universe, it is argued that the sample obtained allows for a statistical analysis of the main trends, providing valuable insights given the exploratory nature of the study,

Appendix 1. Questionnaire

1. I declare that I have read and understood the initial notes, that I am over 18 years old, that I am part of a Gastronomic Confraternity that is active and that I accept to participate, of my own free will, in this study on the Gastronomic Confraternities in Portugal.
2. Indicate your age (in years).
3. Indicate your municipality of residence.
4. Indicate your gender.
5. Indicate your highest level of education.
6. Indicate your main situation at work.
7. What is the name of the Gastronomic Confraternity to which it belongs?
8. What promotes your Confraternity?

the collection effort, and the scarcity of previous studies. Besides, the interpretation of the results should be approached with caution, recognising the possibility of biases (e.g., greater participation of Members with more involvement), the analysis of the sample characteristics about the known diversity of the Confraternity universe suggests that including a greater number of respondents would likely reinforce, rather than fundamentally alter, the results found.

Implications for gastronomy

This article introduces a novel perspective to gastronomy studies by empirically analysing the paradiplomatic potential of Portuguese Gastronomic Confraternities through 222 responses from members of a thoughtful range of 88 Confraternities distributed all over the Portuguese territory. It positions these civic, food-centric associations not merely as cultural hobbyists, but as actors with paradiplomatic capacity absorbed and/or shared by subnational governments capable of contributing to place branding, gastrodiploacy, and heritage promotion. This reconceptualisation challenges existing diplomatic frameworks and highlights the value of grassroots gastronomic agents in shaping Portugal's culinary image abroad. Methodologically, the study also provides one of the largest systematic datasets on gastronomic confraternities to date, helping to bridge the empirical gap in food and diplomacy research.

For gastronomy practitioners and policymakers, the article underscores the need for a coordinated national strategy that formally includes Confraternities in gastrodiploacy efforts. Their territorial capillarity, stakeholder networks, and cultural legitimacy make them key actors for promoting local products and regional culinary identities, both nationally and internationally. However, challenges such as underfunding, aging membership, and folklorisation risks call for better governance, stronger institutional support, and training initiatives. Academically, this research encourages interdisciplinary dialogue across gastronomy, public diplomacy, and regional development, while offering a transferable model to study similar food-based associations in other countries.

Declaration of competing interest

The authors declare that they have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper.

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9. In which municipality is the headquarters of your Confraternity located?
10. In what year did you join the Confraternity?
11. How did you join the Confraternity?
12. Why did you decide to belong to a Confraternity?
13. Based on the municipality of the headquarters of your Confraternity, where you have already participated in the promotion of your confraternity object (dish(s)/product(s)/region/activity)?
14. In Portugal, in what kind of activities to promote the Confraternity participated?
15. Abroad, what kind of activities to promote the Confraternity has participated in?
16. How often have you participated or represented your Confraternity in promotional activities in the last year?
17. As a rule, those who bear the following expenses in their participation in the promotion of their confraternity object or their Confraternity in Portugal?
18. As a rule, those who bear most of the following expenses in their participation in the promotion of their confraternity or their Confraternity Abroad?
19. On average, for how many days do you move outside your home to represent your Confraternity or what it stands for?
20. Drag and sort the elements below in order of importance to the purposes of the work of a Confraternity, in general. 1 = Most important, 7 = Least important
21. What channels do you use to keep up with the news of the confraternity world?
22. What is an exemplary Confraternity for you in terms of the promotion of your confraternity object?
23. If you come across someone who doesn't know your dish(s)/product(s)/region/activity, what is the most effective way to promote it?
24. In his view, so that his Confraternity continues to perform well, with whom is it important to maintain good relationships?
25. Briefly, what is your view on the work of the Portuguese Federation of Gastronomic Confraternities, CEUCO or other entities that aggregate Confraternities??
26. Which of the statements below best reflects the work of your Confraternity?
27. Please indicate the extent to which you agree with the following statements.
28. Find below the latest statements. Say to what extent you agree or disagree with them.
29. This space is yours. Please write what you think is good about the way the Confraternities work, the way they promote their products or other considerations that you deem useful for the preparation of this work.

Appendix 2. – Relevant tables

Table 1
Way of admission to the Confraternity

Way of admission	No.
Through an invitation from other members	108
I was a founder of the Confraternity	78
I had already collaborated with the Confraternity before being enthroned	24
Contacted the Confraternity directly to join	10
By distinction as an Honorary Member or Benefactor Member	2
Total	222

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Table 2
Agreement with the statements of Confraternity dimensions

Dimension	Score	Statements: The Confraternities ...
Confraternities' functioning and members' involvement	1.98	... serve only to promote conviviality around the table among Confraternity members.
	2.29	The members seek to promote themselves more than the product defended.
	2.55	... are very elitist and selective in the entry of their members
	2.75	I use a relevant part of my monthly personal budget in the activities of the Confraternity.
	2.77	... are a lever for the economic activities of their members.
	3.01	Before belonging to a Confraternity, I thought it was difficult to enter or belong to one.
	3.82	... do a job that no other entity does.
Confraternity symbols	4.07	... allow products' certification/qualification.
	4.52	... serve to preserve the memories of flavours.
	3.78	"Pin's" and gifts of my Confraternity are important for its dissemination.
Confraternal identity	4.09	Presence in Chapters is effective in promoting our product/dish/region/activity.
	4.27	The costume is an important part in promoting the object of my Confraternity.
	3.33	The dishes/delicacies of the Confraternities should not be changed under any pretext, namely innovation.
Connection to the Tourism, Economy and Culture sectors	3.77	... are forms of resistance to the eminent culinary decharacterization of Portuguese gastronomy.
	3.50	... promote their products for tourism purposes.
	3.91	... are part of the tourism sector.
	4.14	... contribute to the country's economy.
	4.45	... are part of the culture sector.

Source: Authors' elaboration.

Table 3
Ranking of Confraternities' perceived mission

Statement	Ranking	Avg. mean
A – “Preserve the memory of flavours and/or culinary practices”	1 st	2.44
F – “Enhance Portuguese cuisine as a whole”	2 nd	3.15
E – “Develop the local economy of the municipality/region of the Confraternity”	3 rd	3.71
C – “Attract people to the territory of the Confraternity”	4 th	3.88
B – “Promote social interaction and fraternity among members”	5 th	3.92
D – “Allow innovations to the dishes/specialties/products advocated by the Confraternity”	6 th	4.87
G – “Promote members' personal and professional network”	7 th	6.01

Source: Authors' elaboration

Table 4
Model of Confraternity

Regarding the ... of the Confraternity	Content	Freq.	%
Ends/purposes	Defend; protect; preserve; do not let it change; authenticity; in the old times; traditions; habits; Origins; autochthonous; remember; Ancestors; transmit [to the youngest]; Genuine; recuperate; maintain; historical accuracy/history of the dish; respect the product; safeguard; keep alive; region; regional; traditional.	58	26.1 %
	Promote; disseminate; make known; clarify; divulge; products and values; in Portugal and abroad.	43	19.4 %
	Study the defended products	7	3.2 %
	Valuing the gastronomic heritage	5	2.3 %
	Boosting the regional economy	5	2.3 %
	Solidarity component of the Confraternities; Social projects with the community	4	1.8 %
	Promote sustainability; human and animal dignity; intergenerational responsibility; women's participation; healthy eating; circular economy; Food education	4	1.8 %
	Certify (products, delicacies); legitimising authenticity; certify restaurants.	3	1.4 %
	Increase tourism; Confraternity as a tourism promoter	3	1.4 %
	No economic interests	2	0.9 %
	Dignify the product	1	0.5 %
	Increase sales	1	0.5 %
	Relate to other Confraternities and attend their Chapters and events	13	5.9 %
	Spirit of union and solidarity among members	12	5.4 %
	With the City Council (“Câmara Municipal”); No politics.	2	0.9 %
Agents	Solidarity is not enough	1	0.5 %
	Articulation with restaurants	1	0.5 %
	Intense regularity in actions	1	0.5 %
Frequency			

Source: Authors' elaboration.

Table 5
Techniques and channels for effective Confraternities' gastronomic promotion

Dimension of gastronomic promotion	Strategy	No. of mentions	%
Techniques	Narrative/Explanation	103	46.4 %
	Tasting	76	34.2 %
	Invitation to the region	30	13.5 %
	Recipe/production method explanation	20	9.0 %
	Invitation to the Confraternity event or similar	18	8.1 %
	Recommend Restaurants	12	5.4 %
	Photographs	9	4.1 %
	Commensality and sociability	6	2.7 %
	Elements of the Confraternity - Costume, Pin's, Insignia, Anthem	6	2.7 %
	Leaflets, posters and written information	6	2.7 %
	Videos	4	1.8 %
	Workshops	4	1.8 %
	Praise/Enthusiasm/Curiosity	3	1.4 %
	Producers' indication	3	1.4 %
	Narrative and storytelling	3	1.4 %
	Regionalist narrative	3	1.4 %
	Participate in the cooking/Live cooking	3	1.4 %
	Product characteristics (reputation/uniqueness)	2	0.9 %
	Combating food neophobia/Taste education	2	0.9 %
	Differentiation from other products/regions	2	0.9 %
	Welcoming with excellent food	1	0.5 %
	Mass communication	1	0.5 %
	Present scientific evidence	1	0.5 %
	Evocation of the secret	1	0.5 %
	Explanation of foodways	1	0.5 %
	Narrative supported by Wikipedia	1	0.5 %
	Product Offering	1	0.5 %
	Recommend Hotels	1	0.5 %

(continued on next page)

Table 5 (continued)

Dimension of gastronomic promotion	Strategy	No. of mentions	%
Channels	Gastronomic Fair/Events	26	11.7 %
	Activities in schools	3	1.4 %
	Social media	3	1.4 %
	Presence at events	2	0.9 %
	Presence in the Media	2	0.9 %
	Gastronomy class	1	0.5 %
	Promotion in cafes	1	0.5 %
	Books	1	0.5 %
	Internet presence	1	0.5 %

Source: Authors' elaboration.

Table 6
Relations with other stakeholders

Agents	Score	Ranking
Tourism entities	4.62	1
Culinary and/or gastronomic individualities	4.59	2
Mayor ("Presidente da Câmara Municipal")	4.58	3
Catering and hotel companies	4.54	4
President and members of the Parish Council	4.43	5
FPCG/CEUCO and their representatives	4.43	6
Representatives of other Associations in the same municipality/region	4.37	7
Councillors ("Vereadores") and Members of the Municipal Assembly	4.34	8
Academic entities	4.23	9
Government members	3.82	10
Security Forces and Firefighters	3.77	11
Retired political, civil, military, ecclesiastical or similar	3.59	12
Priest or other local religious entity	3.46	13

Source: Authors' elaboration.

Table 7
Content analysis of the main subjects pointed out by the respondents

Topics	No. of mentions
Promotion and dissemination (Products, delicacies, gastronomy, culture, territory)	57
Members (behaviour, participation, knowledge, vanity/egos, union, costs)	32
Internal functioning, rules and bylaws (organisation, management, leadership, diversity)	25
Chapters and events (format, content, cost, frequency)	25
Relationship with external entities (official and unofficial) and support/financing	21
Preservation of tradition, authenticity and identity	17
Modernisation, openness and renewal of the Confraternity movement (entry of young people, openness to civil society, archaic/elitist image)	13
Role of the FPCG	7

Source: Authors' elaboration

Data availability

The data that has been used is confidential.

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