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Sustainable rural and language tourism for valorisation of farming communities, traditional vocabulary and culture of Madeira Island

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Abstract: This study aims to show the importance of rurality with its local intangible cultural heritage, including the linguistic heritage of Madeira Island, for sustainability and identity of agricultural places — preserving traditional Madeiran culture and the language that is inseparable from the community's rural activities. The methodology used in this qualitative study involved collecting lexical data representing sociocultural realities: vocabulary of agricultural food products and traditional culinary practices, present in the written corpus of Silva's (2021) book. Data processing was done through the traditional words referenced in the texts of local life stories of elders, collected through fieldwork in isolated localities of Campanario in Ribeira Brava municipality, allowing knowledge of Madeiran rural communities' ancestral and actual vocabulary repertoire. The results show the importance of language for expressing and transmitting the heritage of farming places. The selected culture-loaded words and expressions from the two thematic groups of interrelated subjects were: 52 names of traditional agricultural practices, and 39 of culinary practices. The study highlights the richness of the linguistic and cultural heritage of Madeira's rural communities and underscores the importance of valuing and safeguarding this Intangible Cultural Heritage to reinforce Madeira's identity as a sustainable tourism destination, while diversifying the island's tourism experiences and cultural offerings.

Keywords: Intangible cultural heritage; linguistic heritage; rural and language tourism; rural traditions of Madeira; sustainable tourism

1 Introduction

For the 11th consecutive year, the island of Madeira was recognised as a global tourism leader, winning the prestigious title of “World's Leading Island Destination 2025” in the 32nd Annual World Travel Awards (WTA). This comes after, on October 22nd, at the WTA European gala, it was once again considered the Best Island Destination in Europe (Secretaria Regional do Turismo, Ambiente e Cultura, 2025). Madeira also achieved the third level of the EarthCheck Sustainable Tourism Destination silver seal in 2025 (after obtaining in 2024 the second level, related to the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals), once again fulfilling the rigorous criteria established by this entity accredited by the Global Sustainable Tourism Council, within the scope of the certification of tourist destinations (Direção Regional do Turismo, 2025), gold can only be attained by maintaining silver certification for five years.

The EarthCheck on its website states that Madeira, with its “enchanted landscapes and rich cultural heritage, has become a model of sustainable tourism — and the region's EarthCheck certification confirms its status as a leading destination for conscious travellers” (EarthCheck, n.d.). It means that Madeira must evolve while preserving its cultural and natural heritage, respecting the legacy received from ancestors, as fundamental knowledge for the future. These distinctions imply promoting sustainable tourism, which means a more sustainable territory at an environmental, cultural, social, and economic level. To this end, the *Madeira Tourism Strategy for 2022-2027* (Secretaria Regional do Turismo e Cultura, n.d.)

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provides for the preservation of authenticity and diversity, quality of visitor experiences and sustainability of cultural heritage and gastronomy, among others.

The document establishes a set of six strategic pillars for the development of the region, namely, to promote the diversity, differentiation, and structuring of the tourist offer, and to ensure the sustainability of the destination. This is important for current territorial policies for rural tourism growth, mainly after COVID-19, and with the challenges of climate change. Thus, tourist regions must affirm themselves and promote sustainable tourism practices, highlighting the importance of local culture, since Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH) in rural communities can play a key role in the sustainability of tourism in Madeira, as it is inseparable from the territory, society, and culture.

Therefore, sustainability is a big responsibility for the destination of Madeira, as tourism governance and regional planning are essential for sustainable development in ultra-peripheral and insular territories, including rural low-density areas. So, all forms of traditional knowledge must be valorised and preserved for future generations, and this is transmitted through language, which is a means of expression and part of ICH. It can support the local economy and promote sustainable tourism development, making tourism more inclusive for individuals, specifically travellers and host communities, mainly in rural areas. On the UN Tourism website, the Secretary-General Zurab Pololikashvili, in the open call for Best Tourism Villages 2025, writes:

The Best Tourism Villages by UN Tourism celebrates rural destinations where tourism serves as a catalyst for opportunity, cultural preservation, and sustainable growth. By harnessing their unique assets, these villages create opportunities for economic growth, safeguard local traditions, and promote a better quality of life for their communities. We are eager to welcome those villages that represent the role of rural tourism as a transformative force for good. (UN Tourism, 5 Feb. 2025)

He explains that The Best Tourism Villages by UN Tourism initiative aims to leverage tourism as a tool for rural development, well-being, and resilience, combining efforts to value and preserve rural landscapes, cultural diversity, and knowledge systems. The initiative promotes innovative tourism strategies aligned with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), aiming to protect villages and empower and preserve communities' culture. The World Sustainable Travel & Hospitality Awards also contribute to the sustainability of tourism destinations, recognising individuals and organisations that are making an impactful contribution to sustainable travel and tourism.

Rural tourism can contribute to preserving traditional agriculture and, consequently, protecting the Madeiran agricultural landscapes, which are essential for the sustainability of tourism development on the island. At the same time, we can valorise the rich cultural and natural heritage, community values, and sustainable practices that make the destination unique. Unfortunately, agricultural lands are being abandoned and sold for the construction of buildings and houses in response to the increase in tourism and in foreign people who want to live in Madeira. So, there are important preservation measures to implement in rural communities for agricultural and cultural valorisation and economically sustainable growth. The *European Landscape Convention of 2000* refers to the quality of people's living environment, the identification of landscapes' cultural significance, and sustainable landscape's contribution to cultural identity and diversity: "‘Landscape protection’ means actions to conserve and maintain the significant or characteristic features of a landscape, justified by its heritage value derived from its natural configuration and/or from human activity" (Council of Europe, 2000, p. 2).

Therefore, "inappropriate landscape development can change or obliterate locally distinctive characteristics and cultural meanings, creating a break between communities and their past (Antrop, 2005)" (Stephenson, 2008, p. 127). That is why decision makers, in the context of the cultural dynamics of landscapes, need to have detailed knowledge of the values of rural places that support cultural identity and diversity. Stephenson (2008) explains that cultural identity is associated with the ways in which people interact with their landscapes as they contribute to the cultural identity of communities as "place identity", i.e. for self-identity and group identity (intimately connected with the events and history associated with the place). As culture and identity are about social and spatial relationships, there is the need to achieve local, environmental and social sustainability.

By analysing the lexicon documented in Silva's (2021) collection of life-story interviews with older inhabitants of the parish of Campanario (Ribeira Brava), this study seeks to demonstrate how rural tourism can contribute to the promotion and safeguarding of the local linguistic and cultural heritage. Consequently, it improves the sustainable development of communities and their quality of life, creating local employment opportunities, encouraging young people to remain in their localities, and fostering their active involvement in safeguarding their ICH. For this to happen, we must safeguard the traditional know-how of agricultural practices and products, as well as local gastronomy, preserving the uniqueness and

sustainability of the destination. It means to valorise and promote local traditions for a balanced development of the farming communities, respecting their natural and cultural heritage: “enhancing the well-being of individuals, safeguarding the natural environment, stimulating economic advancement for sustainable economic growth” (UN Tourism, n.d.).

ICH in Madeira Island, particularly its local linguistic heritage, serves as a primary pillar for sustaining authentic rural tourism outside the capital city of Funchal. While Funchal’s tourist appeal is centred on tangible monuments, Madeira’s rural municipalities depend directly on living traditions and agricultural festivities to create unique, immersive travel experiences. The main conclusion of this article is that the richness of the linguistic rural heritage related to traditional agriculture and culinary practices should be valorised by residents and visitors as genuine sustainable know-how for the future.

2 Literature review

The Directorate-General for Agriculture and Rural Development (Governo de Portugal, n.d.), about “rural heritage”, declares that it is made of material and immaterial elements, and the rural world “has an infinitely rich cultural, built, natural and landscape heritage”, which urgently needs to be preserved, being “a driver of development for the territory in which it is located”. For that, it is “necessary to recognise the value of the past, protecting and valuing rural heritage, making it known, accessible and interactive with rural populations (...) maintaining ecological balances, preserving self-esteem and economic, social and cultural development”. Tourism in rural areas is associated with tradition and has a significant connection to agriculture, with the environment and landscape. Therefore, it must help maintain the rural characteristics of the region, using local resources and the traditional knowledge of the population, differentiated according to the diversity of local products and the uniqueness of their history, traditions, and culture.

Thus, past knowledge is protected and valued, together with local populations, as they should feel valued for their rural heritage and territory. It includes the ICH (UNESCO, 2003) of the places and all practices, traditions and knowledge that a community considers part of its cultural heritage, including oral traditions and language. Heller (2003) presents language as one of the elements that defines the cultural heritage of a population, including the naming of their artefacts, values and worldviews.

Redondo-Carretero et al. (2017) explain that it results in a niche market: language tourism. In turn, Richards (2018) highlights the increasing interest of tourists in this heritage and in peripheral areas. Lonardi & Unterpertinger (2022) mention the desire and need of some tourists to learn some aspects of the language of the communities they visit. In rural tourism, visitors’ interest in language is related to the history of local farming practices, the traditional use and transformation of products of the land or culinary knowledge associated with cycles of nature, as well as the techniques and know-how that contributed to the creation of agricultural landscapes.

Remoaldo (2017) states that the experiences of the past are the basis for the construction of a sustainable future for locals and visitors and argues that sustainable development must preserve the sociocultural heritage and traditional values of the host communities. Kastenholz et al. (2014) show how traditions related to nature and culture are fundamental for rural tourism in Portugal, referring to the cultural repertoires of communities’ identity, which have been neglected in the past. These authors study the co-creation of sustainable experiences in the context of rural tourism as a multidimensional reality, including the traditional local language for an integral tourist experience (being a resource of rural destinations). Thus, tourism contributes to sustainable development with the preservation of the ICH of rural communities through a comprehensive experience in which language is inseparable from heritage and landscape. According to Rosenfeld (2008), visitors’ motivation for cultural tourism is the interest in a community’s heritage offerings, in rural or urban contexts. For that reason, and as concepts of culture and heritage overlap, in this article we use the terms rural and language tourism as linguistic heritage is related to the intrinsic specificities of farming communities.

Mirela and Dumitrescu (2012) refer to the importance of attention to the social and cultural consequences of rural tourism for local populations, as well as the ecological impact, as fundamental elements of sustainable development. They explain that sustainable rural tourism development meets the present needs without harming the environment for future generations. They mention the European Federation for Rural Tourism and other associations for the development of rural tourism. This can be a way to ensure the continuity of traditional elements of social life and agricultural work for future generations, not to deprive them of identity. At the same time, it can contribute to improving living conditions, in line with the population’s wish to take advantage of modern elements of life. The authors state that the

recovery of the rural areas is also an essential objective for the motivation and satisfaction of tourists. At the same time, it can stimulate state institutions, the private sector, and associations in the field to intensify efforts to obtain a corresponding infrastructure related to the level of tourist development. The main aim is the sustainable and integrated development of rural tourism, within limits within a given area, meaning management to prevent the destruction of the ecological balance of the community. As it implies social and economic activities with material and human resources of farming communities, key elements for sustainable development must be determined by authorities with the involvement and initiative of local communities, for example traditional type and origin of food and products obtained, development of crafts and local traditional art, the creation of facilities and the support of the development of hostels and agritourism households network, of some micro-complexes of agri-food production for the supply of the population and of tourists with local products, the management of the tourism activity, actions of protection and preservation of the environment and historic-cultural resources, among other measures.

The European Union's (n.d.) rural vision recognises the economic potential and identity of rural areas and the importance of their preservation for the future, including ecosystems and landscapes, to achieve a balanced territorial development for sustainable rural economies and communities. The main objectives are to restore, preserve and enhance ecosystems related to agriculture and forestry and to promote social inclusion, reduction of poverty and economic development in rural areas. According to Răcășan and Egresi (2020), there are few tourist destinations and development in peripheral rural areas and mainly independent travellers visit these places, as tourism is concentrated in cities or sea and mountain resorts. When they exist, authors mention they are generally owned and operated from outside rather than integrated into local economies. However, worldwide the trend is toward moving away from mass tourism and embracing alternative forms of tourism in rural territories (agritourism, nature-based tourism and heritage tourism). The authors affirm that these forms of tourism are generally small in scale and considered friendlier to the environment and more ethical in their relationship with local communities. They also state that travellers interested in practising these alternative forms of tourism are generally more educated, more interested in local cultures, and more willing to spend money locally. Răcășan and Egresi (2020) add that rural features in the past that were disadvantageous

(isolation, lack of infrastructure, economic and social underdevelopment and traditionalism) could be considered favourable today, as more travellers are looking for distinctive, personalised, and unique products. They conclude that rural tourism nowadays is very important as it is sensitive to the existence of a "sense of place", based on local natural resources and cultural authenticity.

Rural areas are less populated and predominantly silent. Furthermore, natural resources (important elements for well-being) are available in a harmonious way of living in community, allowing a profound cultural immersion of visitors. Conservation of local traditions and identities is also important for sustainable tourism, as it contributes to fixing the local population through their valorisation and better life conditions. To this end, tourist accommodations must be harmoniously integrated according to the small scale of rural territories. Therefore, rural tourism can be defined as a set of tourist activities carried out where agricultural production forms the basis of the population's traditional diet. That is why *Tourism Strategy 2027. Leading the Tourism of the Future* (Turismo de Portugal, 2017) aims at valuing people as the main asset for a sustainable destination and the products and services offered by the local population, promoting the community's cultural and natural heritage.

Rural tourism reconciles local development and nature conservation as a niche market of small groups in search of enriching and memorable experiences, associated with well-being and happiness. Vukovic (2022) shows that the interest in rural tourism (in a peaceful environment with traditional values) is increasing and explains the importance of protecting the destination area and preserving local identity for sustainable tourism. The author claims that authenticity, as the uniqueness of a sustainable tourist destination, is understood as diversity based on the existing natural and cultural resources. Thus, achieving and maintaining environmental sustainability is to protect the quality of life of the local population, preserving their inherited cultural values that will offer tourists a genuine, pleasant and unforgettable experience. He highlights the importance of good knowledge of local heritage to strengthen the existing identity and sustainability of tourist destinations, including the language of the historical and contemporary realities. Lexicon is tightly coupled with material culture, ecological conditions, and historically situated practices. So, it refers to practices, tools, or environmental conditions central to a community's lived experience. The conclusion is that a place's cultural identity contributes to more effective protection of local community resources and has a positive

impact on residents and tourist satisfaction. Therefore, it is necessary and urgent to restore natural and cultural heritage related to rurality, through traditional agriculture and food for sustainable development. With the urbanisation of rural areas and their mischaracterisation, local ICH is at risk of disappearing with the consequent loss of traditional rural landscapes.

Blancas et al. (2010, p. 113) state that to respect the principles of sustainable development, it is important to actively manage the space, preserving and restoring the wealth of inherited cultural resources in their original forms, as traditions of life and work of the resident population. Consequently, the identity of the destination is determined by the role and significance of cultural heritage and the protection of the local environment. Thus, it is necessary to know the socio-historical and cultural reality of the places, documenting, understanding and transmitting the traditional heritage of farming communities. The transmission of local knowledge presupposes the domain of linguistic heritage, which implies concepts and words and their translation to English for foreign visitors. Rebelo (2016, pp. 287–288) defines linguistic heritage as “a set of verbal, oral and/or written goods, typical of a community because it identifies and distinguishes it from others, in its ways of communicating or experiencing its own realities”. This is part of an inheritance of older generations accumulated over centuries, linked to nature, with technical knowledge related to sustainable traditional agriculture. As local and regional traditional knowledge, it is inseparable from the identity practices of the communities that guarantee the cultural authenticity of the territory.

Madeira’s rural heritage constitutes an opportunity for diversification of natural and cultural tourist points to visit on the island. Isolated localities with low-density territories have rich sociocultural traditions and are a good example for sustainable activities with an authentic sense of place. These farming communities present an interesting linguistic heritage, with ancient words and expressions related to elders’ traditional know-how of agricultural and culinary local practices. Through concerted intervention by public and private organisations, it is possible to create facilities and accessibility for sustainable and responsible tourist activities, contributing to the safeguard and valorisation of residents’ identity, as well as their well-being and that of visitors. According to Nunes (2024), tourism associated with agriculture can be a way to maintain the ICH of rural communities, namely the linguistic heritage from the past at risk of disappearing today, through the revitalisation of agricultural heritage, local crafts, customs, and cultural identities. Accordingly,

it contributes to the sustainable development of farming communities by creating opportunities for young people to remain, work, and actively participate in safeguarding their local linguistic and cultural heritage.

Rural and language tourism offer experiences linked to the values of nature and traditions which have been lost in the urban environment. To implement this type of tourism, which is educational and at the same time participatory, it is necessary to carry out collective cultural and social actions to strengthen the communities, involving them in the awareness and appreciation of their own cultural heritage. To this end, the storytelling of rural populations’ living memories is important, and Silva’s book (2021) is an example of these narratives, preserving linguistic heritage that brings together the past and the present. The growing appreciation of diversity and local identity is associated with territories that find the most precious resource in their cultural heritage. Therefore, rural and language tourism are related to local linguistic heritage, increasingly inseparable from farming communities’ identity. A way of preserving this heritage is making lexical repertoires, systematising the traditional knowledge of rural populations. This paper adopts the concept of Gumperz’s (1964) linguistic repertoire approach, a set of cultural and linguistic resources of a community, as an instrument in valuing its linguistic heritage and identity.

Cheng et al. (2025) highlight that tourist experiences, namely culinary practices, became meaningful when embedded in their cultural identity, historical memory, local ecology and everyday life. So, food-related narratives of localities’ traditional agriculture transmit the authenticity of the places through socially mediated experiences. Tourists recognise communities’ identity, interpret heritage meanings, and develop connections with the destination. It also promotes culinary authenticity through place-based identity and the continuity of food-related traditions. Rural and language tourism are important forms of cultural tourism, allowing tourists to encounter local heritage, traditions and everyday practices of culturally distinctive communities. The development of a tourism village depends not only on its local potential but also on integrating the local language into the visitor experience.

For that, we use the written data available in Silva (2021), collected and systematised in this article, as a lexical repertoire of isolated localities’ rural heritage. The research questions of this study are: Does the linguistic heritage documented in the corpus and systematised in the repertoire of the rural places show historical and socio-cultural significance for sustainable rural and language

tourism?; culture-loaded words are positively correlated to the recognition of local rural identity, and language tourism can have a positive impact on the protection and safeguarding of communities' ICH?; the quality and quantity of the linguistic heritage-based repertoire of the communities have cultural diversity interest for local rural and language tourism?

Nomnian et al. (2020) show that language and community-based tourism are interconnected for knowledge sharing between residents and visitors, explaining that in village communities there is a dependency on tour guides to express language users' sociocultural and linguistic identities. Culture-loaded lexicon poses significant challenges in translation because they encode specific concepts, values, and practices. However, Madeira University's students on Tourism Information and Marketing, working together with communities, can translate and explain to visitors the local rural linguistic heritage as a meaningful educational resource for them. At the same time, it is essential to recognise that cultural landscapes have undergone processes of hybridisation and transformation, reflecting the dynamics of contemporary sociolinguistic contexts.

3 Methodology

Silva's book (2021), which comprises a collection of life-story interviews documenting the isolated lives of rural communities in the highlands of the municipality of Ribeira Brava, constitutes a valuable source of older local inhabitants' knowledge. It provides a rich foundation for contextualising local linguistic heritage within meaningful sociocultural settings and for incorporating it into authentic rural tourism experiences. The book is organised in three main parts: historical context; occupations (unpaid work and paid work); festivities and entertainment (days of celebration and rest). The corpus-based qualitative approach involved identifying, collecting, and translating with checked accuracy representative culture-loaded vocabulary related to the local identity and linguistic heritage of farming communities, with a particular focus on traditional food-related agricultural practices.

The study carried out a systematic survey of the local lexicon, according to its sociocultural context. The testimonies of older inhabitants provide valuable insights into both their personal histories and the history of the local communities, revealing how traditional food culture developed from small-scale subsistence farming based on

each family's cultivated land. These accounts also document the principal crops, watermills, cattle rearing, food traditions, and popular festivals that shaped rural life. Through rural and language tourism, the unique linguistic heritage of the territories and their inhabitants is valued, guaranteeing the identity, attractiveness and distinctiveness of traditional farming communities as tourist destinations. In this case, the most important aspect of linguistic heritage is the residents' traditional know-how, denominations and descriptions that contribute to reinforcing the authenticity of local agri-food products, preserving ancient culinary practices.

Silva (2021) values registering the language spoken that expresses rural heritage and sociocultural experiences associated with local circumstances. The selected lexicon was organised into two lists identified as: vocabulary of agricultural food products, and vocabulary of traditional culinary practices. The Portuguese words were translated into English, and their meanings explained, creating a bilingual lexical repertoire of local traditions related to the rich cultural assets of the rural communities. When combined with the safeguarding of agricultural practices as ICH, this repertoire can strengthen visitors' engagement with local communities and support the intergenerational transmission of traditional know-how, food practices and linguistic heritage.

4 Results

The data analysis of the corpus shows that the high-altitude rural localities of Ribeira Brava are known for chestnuts, mainly in Serra do Campanario due to its abundance of chestnut trees. November is known as the month of chestnuts, especially in the mountains where there is a plantation of ancient chestnut trees. As Silva (2021) writes, the chestnut plays an important role in trade for the local population. The chestnut feast, an initiative created by the Campanario Sports Association in operation since 2010, as the author explains, is very important for local people. It has varied animation — musical groups, competitions and traditional games — with a great variety of chestnut-based products for sale, such as soup, *ponchas*, *malassadas*, cakes and roast chestnuts, with the aim of promoting the local product and recognising the value of local populations and their traditions.

The linguistic heritage repertoire, with translation to English and some explained meanings, was divided into two lexical groups: vocabulary of agricultural food

products (Table 1), and vocabulary of traditional culinary practices (Table 2).

Table 1, with 52 culture-loaded lexical items, shows that chestnuts were important in the daily life of local populations. They appear several times, namely as smoked black chestnuts, sieved chestnuts, soaked chestnuts, crushed chestnuts, and dried chestnuts. Other fruits mentioned are almonds, walnuts, figs and apples. About cereals, the following were documented: oats, rye, barley and wheat, together with chickpea legume. Regarding tubers, were recorded: potato, sweet potato, and yam. Plants were also mentioned: sorrel, sugarcane, pine needles, and lupins from the lupin grower.

The sociocultural vocabulary of traditional culinary practices, 39 words and expressions, is mainly related to daily food. The local population made porridge with roasted barley flour, and different soups and broths: barley broth, *frangolho* broth, corn broth, chestnut soup, cabbage soup, wheat soup, pumpkin soup and broth, as well as chicken soup and boiled corn. The dietary staple for rural communities also included pork and its grease, some fish, namely mackerel and cod (exchanged for local agricultural produce with women from visiting fishing communities). Regarding breads and cakes, there were white bread and black bread (made with cracked wheat), biscuits, kale cake, cane honey cake, Savoy cake recipe, and traditional cakes for weddings. Local communities also made coffee from roasted barley, broad beans, and chickpeas, and made *poncha* (an alcoholic drink).

The knowledge of the two lexical fields is intrinsically related and culturally inseparable. This traditional vocabulary reflects Madeira's rural identity and cultural heritage, confirming that language is a key vehicle for transmitting agricultural and culinary local practices.

5 Discussion

The qualitative, interpretive, corpus-based approach adopted in this study, drawing on Silva's (2021) collection of life stories narrated by older residents in Campanario, supported the exploratory objective of documenting and valorising the linguistic heritage of rural communities as a strategic resource for developing sustainable, community-based rural and language tourism experiences that promote heritage interpretation, visitor engagement, and the safeguarding of ICH. The culture-loaded vocabulary associated with traditional practices provides valuable insights into Madeira's rural identity and constitutes an important resource for designing authentic rural and

language tourism experiences in local communities. As Vukovic (2022) highlights, good knowledge of local heritage strengthens the identity and sustainability of tourist destinations. The rural knowledge and its linguistic repertoire presented in this study consists of the names of agricultural activities and food products as ICH related mainly to the past daily life subsistence of local populations. It is about farming culture associated with eating habits of the mentioned places, giving rise to practices, cooking processes and culinary recipes. The predominance of food-product vocabulary shows how important it is to the identity of local populations. To have some money, they walked long hours through the mountains to come to Funchal to sell chestnuts and apples carried on their backs (men) and heads (women). Sometimes they exchanged them for bananas, oranges, chayotes, sweet potatoes, pumpkins and figs, which they could not produce in the high areas of Ribeira Brava. It is an important experience of rural collaborative ecosystems and an efficient practice for local sustainability of residents and visitors.

This traditional knowledge of nature, local agricultural products, and culinary practices constitutes a sociocultural heritage that is at risk of disappearing due to the lack of interest of younger generations in the rural traditions of the region. Consequently, this knowledge is not being transmitted, jeopardising the continuity of local identities. As Stephenson (2008) explains, "place identity" is made through the ways in which communities interact with landscapes (intimately connected with the local events and history). The heritage repertoire of culturally loaded words and expressions of localities can be used to create tourist storytelling activities about the local products, the people's life stories, and the places. This can reverse the trend of losing rural places' identity, and consequently the diversity and environmental, social and cultural sustainability of Madeiran rural areas. In this way, rural and language tourism can contribute to the preservation of traditional knowledge in rural communities, leveraging ICH as a strategic resource to safeguard both natural and cultural assets in the context of climate-related challenges, while promoting local production and consumption.

The results of the data analysis systematised in Tables 1 and 2 as the linguistic heritage-based lexical repertoire of elderly people in highland communities of Ribeira Brava confirm the relevance of these rural places with historical and sociocultural significance for sustainable rural and language tourism. The diversity of culture-loaded words is positively correlated to the recognition and valorisation of local identities, and language tourism can have a positive impact on the protection and

Table 1: Vocabulary of agricultural food products

Vocabulary in Portuguese	English Translation (and explanation)
1. <i>amêndoas</i>	almonds
2. <i>apanhar o pão</i>	harvesting cereals to make bread
3. <i>aveia</i>	oats (for cows)
4. <i>azedas</i>	sorrel (eaten young)
5. <i>batata (doce)</i>	sweet potato
6. <i>borracha</i>	rubber (pig bladder)
7. <i>borracha com poncha</i>	rubber with <i>poncha</i> (to transport and drink)
8. <i>cartola de vinho</i>	wine barrel
9. <i>cascas das nozes</i>	walnut shells (used to dye fabric)
10. <i>caninha or cana-de-açúcar</i>	sugar cane (to suck)
11. <i>carepa da castanha</i>	chestnut skin
12. <i>casca da castanha</i>	chestnut shells
13. <i>castanhas</i>	chestnuts (eaten as snacks and in soups)
14. <i>castanhas alveiradas</i>	smoked black chestnuts
15. <i>castanhas cirandadas</i>	sieved chestnuts
16. <i>castanhas molhadas</i>	soaked chestnuts
17. <i>castanhas pisadas</i>	crushed chestnuts
18. <i>castanhas secas</i>	dried chestnuts
19. <i>cearas de trigo</i>	wheat fields
20. <i>centeio</i>	rye
21. <i>centeio moído</i>	ground rye
22. <i>cesto de vindima</i>	harvest basket
23. <i>cevada pisada</i>	crushed barley
24. <i>cevada torrada</i>	roasted barley (to make coffee)
25. <i>ciranda de castanhas</i>	chestnut sieve (instrument used in the chestnut preparation process)
26. <i>cirandar as castanhas</i>	sifting chestnuts (process used to remove their skin)
27. <i>engrer</i>	separating the wheat grain from the bran
28. <i>espigas or galhas de pinheiro</i>	pine needles (that elder poor people sucked to keep from starving)
29. <i>figos passados</i>	dried figs
30. <i>fogueira</i>	bonfire (made daily for three weeks to a month, so the chestnuts are dry)
31. <i>fumo da lenha</i>	wood smoke (burned to dry the chestnuts, these must be stirred every day, so they do not turn black from smoking, after drying)
32. <i>grão-de-bico torrado</i>	roasted chickpeas (to make coffee, chickpeas were dried, roasted in an iron pot and ground)
33. <i>inhame</i>	yam
34. <i>leite</i>	cow's milk
35. <i>máquina</i>	milk machine (to separate cream for butter)
36. <i>moer o leite or desnatar o leite</i>	“grind” the milk (to remove the cream)
37. <i>mongal/mangal/mangual</i>	flail (instrument for threshing wheat)
38. <i>nogueiras</i>	walnut trees
39. <i>nozes</i>	walnuts
40. <i>peros</i>	apples
41. <i>pisar as castanhas</i>	treading the chestnuts (to remove the skin from the chestnuts after they have dried)
42. <i>porquinho da festa</i>	party piggy (a pig for Christmas)
43. <i>semear o pão</i>	sowing cereals to make bread
44. <i>semilha</i>	potato
45. <i>semilhal</i>	potato field
46. <i>semilhas secas</i>	dried potatoes
47. <i>soro</i>	whey (saved for pigs)
48. <i>tempo do pão</i>	harvest time
49. <i>tremoços</i>	lupin beans (eaten at Easter)
50. <i>vacas de leite</i>	milk cows
51. <i>venda do leite</i>	sale of milk
52. <i>vinho</i>	wine (homemade)

Table 2: Vocabulary of traditional culinary practices

Vocabulary in Portuguese	English translation (and explanation)
1. <i>alanho de carne</i>	bacon (pork rind and fat put in the soup)
2. <i>bacalhau</i>	cod
3. <i>bolachas</i>	biscuits
4. <i>bolo de couve</i>	kale cake (round bread, cooked in a cabbage leaf on the embers)
5. <i>bolo de mel de cana</i>	cane honey cake
6. <i>bolo de Saboia</i>	Savoy cake recipe
7. <i>bolo doce</i>	sweet cake
8. <i>bolos da serra</i> or <i>bolos de vasilha</i> or <i>bolo da noiva/do noivo</i>	traditional cakes (for weddings, that were kneaded for the bride and groom, bride's cake or groom's cake)
9. <i>bolos de leite</i>	milk cakes (bread rolls)
10. <i>cacau</i>	cocoa
11. <i>café da fava</i>	broad bean coffee (it was yellow, made from roasted broad beans)
12. <i>caldo de cevada</i>	barley broth (cooked with pork, cabbage, potato, sweet potato, beans and pumpkin)
13. <i>caldo de frangolho</i>	<i>frangolho</i> broth (made in the pan with bits of pork)
14. <i>caldo de milho</i>	corn broth (cooked with sweet potatoes, peas or beans, pumpkin, chayote, potato and pork)
15. <i>caldo de vinagre</i>	vinegar broth (peeled yam, cooked with beans and pork, potatoes and sorrel)
16. <i>canja</i>	chicken soup
17. <i>cavalas (de escabeche)</i>	mackerel with parsley, garlic and pepper (to be eaten with potatoes)
18. <i>cevada com batata</i>	barley with sweet potato (baked barley with two sweet potato bread rolls)
19. <i>chá de segurelha</i>	savory tea (to facilitate childbirth)
20. <i>espetos de malassadas</i>	dumplings cooked in oil on skewers (that neighbours ask for door to door at Shrovetide)
21. <i>estraçoar o milho em grão</i>	crushing corn kernels
22. <i>farelo do trigo</i>	wheat bran for pigs
23. <i>fervinha de porco</i>	slices of pork
24. <i>frangolho</i>	porridge made with toasted and ground wheat (cooked with sweet potato, beans, and pork)
25. <i>gofo</i>	porridge made with roasted barley flour (it would have been introduced to Madeira by the Guanches from the Canary Islands, in the 15th century)
26. <i>graxa</i>	grease (pork fat, used to season food)
27. <i>malassadas</i>	dumplings (cooked in oil)
28. <i>massa/massinha cortada</i>	pasta/cut dough
29. <i>milho cozido</i>	boiled corn (with lard and spices)
30. <i>molho de vilão</i>	villain sauce (made with vinegar and lard)
31. <i>pão</i>	bread (made with wheat flour)
32. <i>pão preto</i>	black bread (made with cracked wheat)
33. <i>poncha</i>	alcoholic drink (traditionally made with sugar cane brandy, lemon and honey)
34. <i>rosários de doces</i>	candy necklace
35. <i>selha de peixe</i>	wooden bowl with fish
36. <i>sopa de castanha</i>	chestnut soup
37. <i>sopa de couve</i>	cabbage soup (with potatoes, sweet potatoes, beans and chives)
38. <i>sopa de trigo (pisado)</i>	wheat soup (crushed wheat with chestnuts)
39. <i>sopa/caldo de abóbora</i>	pumpkin soup/broth (with potatoes, chayote, black squash, yellow squash, soft or dried beans, chives, and a little pasta)

safeguarding of communities' ICH. Mirela and Dumitrescu (2012) state that the recovery of the rural areas is also an essential objective for the motivation and satisfaction of tourists, and community heritage language associated with traditional agricultural and culinary practices can have a positive impact on them. However, to implement sustainable rural and language tourism in the mentioned places, it is necessary to validate the interest and perceptions of residents about tourist activities in their communities. At the same time, it is important to involve farming communities in the recognition and valorisation of their own ICH, giving them the opportunity to engage with tourists, sharing their life stories and transmitting their traditional agri-food knowledge.

It is necessary to create local conditions to receive tourists, to connect them with locals, and to translate their life stories and traditional know-how, when necessary. To this end, institutions such as local community centres (*Casas do Povo*) and the Campanario Sports and Cultural Association, in partnership with young students at the University of Madeira's higher technical and professional tourism courses, could facilitate tourism and sociocultural activities. There is an increasing number of tourists looking for peaceful and educational holidays in contact with nature, having a connection with local communities' ICH as ethnographic and linguistic heritage. The findings of this study show that the traditional agricultural landscape is part of the cultural identity of residents, but it is also important for the sustainability of Madeira Island tourism. Preserving agricultural landscapes contributes to better environmental quality of life for the local population and sustainable tourist activities. Therefore, it is necessary to maintain the identity of rural places and the cultural diversity of communities through local agricultural products, in this case mainly chestnut cultivation, while preserving the traditional knowledge associated with the language of the local elderly population.

The revitalisation of rural communities' agricultural traditions is the best way to ensure the economic, social and environmental sustainability of tourism in Madeira and territorial identity. Rural areas are undergoing tremendous transformation and need to be protected for the diversification of local and regional tourism. Only with the participation of rural communities and municipalities can tourism contribute to empowering populations' cultural and language heritage potential, avoiding the negative changes and impacts on local dynamics. Rural bilingual lexical repertoires show the importance of linguistic heritage for sustainable rural and language tourism as it is intrinsically related to local customs and traditions and gives communities an ethnolinguistic identity.

6 Conclusions

The paper's practical contributions are the intersection of linguistic heritage, rural identity, and sustainable tourism, emphasising how traditional vocabulary from farming communities serves as cultural resources for preserving the island's authenticity, cultural identity, and sustainability. Language functions as a vehicle for transmitting cultural knowledge, valorising local ICH related to rural life and agriculture. We demonstrate the importance of agri-food in rural places and their linguistic heritage — specifically the vocabulary of Madeira's farming communities — based on textual and linguistic analysis of Silva's book (2021), which records elders' life stories and traditional know-how from isolated highland communities in Ribeira Brava municipality.

The qualitative methodology, based on the systematic compilation of the local lexicon, provides a valuable resource for documenting the linguistic heritage of rural communities. Culture-loaded words related to agricultural food products and traditional culinary practices were identified, translated and systematised into two lexical groups, building a bilingual heritage repertoire. It allows showing that the ICH of rural communities as sociocultural and linguistic identity are essential for sustainable rural and language tourism development. This type of tourism is fundamental to counteract the trend towards the abandonment of agricultural land, disorderly urbanisation, and environmental degradation that leads to the loss of local and regional cultural identity. At the same time, through connection with locals, tourists can learn about their culture and protect agri-food traditional knowledge of places, contributing to the enhancement of cultural authenticity, and experiencing well-being in rural places close to nature.

The rural parish of Campanario offers significant potential for developing tourism experiences based on the interrelationship between language, landscape, agricultural practices, and community knowledge, in which linguistic heritage is associated with traditional small-scale family farming, including oral narratives, ecological knowledge, and vernacular expressions as an integral component of its ICH. The traditional chestnut landscape, together with the expertise of elderly knowledge holders, provides an ideal setting for co-created tourism products that promote both cultural sustainability and community well-being, participating in the design and delivery of tourism experiences. Such an approach strengthens intergenerational knowledge transmission while generating complementary income opportunities within rural communities.

The culture-loaded words related to agriculture, food, and daily rural practices link linguistic data to broader

concepts of identity, sustainability, and rural tourism development. It can be used for community-based tourism experiences, for visitors to experience genuine places and traditions; connect with the place, its people, stories and culture; value the local identity, landscape, products and way of life; respect, preserve and celebrate natural resources and cultural heritage; engage with local communities and support a better future to benefit all. Community-based rural and language tourism experiences can contribute to valorising local ICH, namely traditional agriculture and food practices related to sustainable daily life, diversifying Madeira's tourist offer.

Valorising rural heritage as the preservation of agricultural knowledge of the past is important for building a sustainable future. In that regard, rural and language tourism can be used to achieve a high degree of visitor satisfaction and provide unique and memorable experiences through involvement with local communities, having an authentic sense of the places while preserving their identity. Sustainable rural and language tourism may be understood as the intersection of linguistic heritage, living heritage, community participation, sustainable rural development, and experiential learning. Sustainability in tourism contributes to improving the quality of life of both residents and visitors. As tourism is intrinsically linked to all dimensions of community life, sustainable practices are increasingly appreciated by tourists, generating economic and social benefits for farming communities. Traditional knowledge and linguistic diversity, preserving the agricultural know-how of rural places, is the most effective way to ensure the sustainability of tourism in Madeira. Linguistic heritage repertoires can contribute to reinforcing community identity, promoting the intergenerational transmission of knowledge, and enhancing the resilience of local cultural landscapes for grounded and sustainable models of territorial development.

6.1 Limitations and future research

This study highlights the diversity and richness of rural communities' ICH and creates a bilingual lexical repertoire as a tool for language tourism; however, the use of a single data source limits the representativeness of the study. Future research should triangulate these findings with additional oral history interviews and field observations to enhance the validity and robustness of the results. A mixed-methods design and comparative approach could combine the lexical exploratory analysis with survey data from residents and tourists to measure perceptions of linguistic heritage and tourism potential,

adding analytical depth and methodological transparency and substantiating the study's conclusions.

Further research can develop the concepts of Agri-food Heritage Tourism or Ethnolinguistic Agri-food Tourism. It should also explore how the lexical repertoire can inform tourism products, including: (i) chestnut heritage experiences, combining seasonal harvesting, traditional agricultural practices, local gastronomy trails, and the specialised vocabulary associated with chestnut cultivation; (ii) language and rural landscape tours, through local toponymy and storytelling shared by community members; (iii) farm living workshops, introducing visitors to the linguistic heritage of agriculture through practical demonstrations and interaction with local knowledge holders; and (iv) intergenerational heritage experiences, allowing visitors to participate in farming activities while learning traditional terminology, agricultural know-how, and cultural practices transmitted by older residents. These experiences involve community members as active interpreters of their linguistic and cultural heritage, generating benefits for local communities through sustainable tourism, and transforming tourism from passive observation into participatory, place-based learning, where visitors engage simultaneously with language, culture, and traditional ecological knowledge.

Bionote

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Data availability statement

The data supporting the analyses and findings presented in this paper are derived from Silva (2021) published collection of life stories. The ethical integrity of the study is safeguarded, as the narratives and linguistic material are used in an anonymised form, with no personal data identifying the older participants being disclosed or referenced. Community ownership of language and traditions is respected, with no cultural appropriation.

Conflicts of interest

The author of the article “Sustainable rural and language tourism for valorisation of farming communities, traditional vocabulary and culture of Madeira Island” declares no conflict of interest.

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