

GRAPE HOUSE

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Abstract

The present article concerns our will to expand and rebuild a previously assembled building with the purpose of producing, processing and commercializing regional agricultural products.

The main focus of this project will be the usage of a terrain with specific agricultural features which will be used not only for private use and consumption but also for exporting/marketing of regional agricultural products.

This marketing strategy will be conducted through the amplification and rebuilding of a preexisting stone masonry house located in the plot. In other words, the housing will work as a

“Tasting House” for its own agricultural products.

The project has one other purpose concerning the advertisement of several other regional manufacturers. In this regard, the project will have its own exhibition site which will subsequently have one other adjacent unit related to agro-tourism activities and a swimming pool, complementing the desired effect on the marketing strategy for the region.

The possibilities/philosophy brought by the agro-tourism to the region will allow not only to spread its recognition but also to generate more jobs regarding the agro-cultural production and the maintenance of all the adjacent structures.

Note: Currently applying for financial support (PRODER)

Keywords: Welfare, Familiar environment, Tourism

Introduction

Tourism is a phenomenon which takes us to the old days. Many civilizations, such as the Greek or even the Roman, had secondary residences in the suburbs. Nowadays this practice hasn't changed significantly, since the human being has felt the need to move. This behaviour may be associated to other factors, from the search for attractions and diversions to climatic factors, economic factors or even fulfilling a fantasy.

For all these reasons and some others, it is believed that tourism is a culture unifying activity, and therefore quite profitable, because people all over the world consider trips a good way to spend their free time.

International acknowledgement

In recent years Europe has registered an increase of income associated to tourism of about 306 million euros. Portugal is not an exception since it has taken advantage of this tendency in a certain way.

A curious fact concerning the evolution of Portugal when compared to other countries with much more potential, such as Sweden and Poland, is that in 2001 the country was able to collect about 6.1 million euros, surpassing these two nations.

A study released by the World Tourism Organization in 2006, considers Portugal one of the 20 best destinations in the world. A fact that proves this right is the increasing number of foreigners that want to visit our country, which has even surpassed the number of national residents.

In the year 2007 Portugal even surpassed Russia, reaching 12.3 million tourists, and in 2013 received an acknowledgement by the Condé Nast Traveller, which claimed that our landscapes, gastronomy, beaches, the people's affection and mainly our expertise in using technology while respecting our History made Portugal the best destination to travel in that year.

The year 2013 was indeed a very positive period. Lonely Planet elected Porto the best of 10 destinations in Europe, and in the following year the North American newspaper USA Today chose Portugal as the best country to spend vacations in Europe, focusing on the beaches, the gastronomy, the Algarve, the Port Wine and, of course, fado (World Heritage).

All these numbers concerning the growth of tourism in Portugal mentioned above are reinforced by INE (Statistics National Institute) in studies carried out in 2012 and 2013, which are presented as follows:

“According to the provisional data from the World Tourism Organization, the number of worldwide tourist arrivals in 2012 stood for a year-on-year growth of 4.0%, corresponding to 39 million tourists. Europe hosted more than half of the international tourists (51.6%) and presented a 3.4% growth when compared with the previous year. However, the most favourable results came from Asia and The Pacific (+7.0%) and Africa (+6.4%). The Middle East was the only region to present a declining result in year-on-year terms (-5.4%).

In Portugal, according to the Balance of Payment produced by Banco de Portugal, the item Travel had its revenue increased by 5.6% and the

expenditure decreased by 0.9% in 2012. Therefore, the balance of this item showed a significant positive trend in this year.

Revenue reached EUR 8 606 million while expenditure stood for EUR 2 946 million, which led to a EUR 5 660 million balance in 2012 in Travel item, against EUR 5 172 million in 2011 (+9.4%). (...)”¹⁸

“In 2013, according to the provisional data from the World Tourism Organization, the number of tourist arrivals worldwide totalled 1 086.8 million, representing a 5.0% increase when compared to 2012. Europe concentrated more than half of the arrivals of international tourists (51.8%), 5.4% more than in 2012.

The region of Asia and the Pacific recorded the biggest increase in tourist arrivals (+6.2%), followed by Africa (+5.4%) and America (+3.2%). The Middle East recorded, yet again, a decline in the number of incoming tourists (-0.2%) in comparison with the previous year.

According to data from Banco de Portugal with regard to the item “Travel and Tourism” from the Balance of Payments, with reference to 2013, revenue has increased for the fourth consecutive year in relation to the previous year (+7.5%), totalling EUR 9 250 million.

Expenditure on “Travel and Tourism” went over the EUR 3 million mark (EUR 3 120 million), a 5.9% growth compared to 2012. In 2013, the balance regarding this item stood at

EUR 6 130 million with a resulting 8.3% annual growth (+9.4% in 2012). (...)”¹⁹

Another Portuguese renowned organization (Tourism of Portugal) presents us with some 2014 results and predictions for 2015 that we will present below:

“(...) Summary of the main conclusions for the winter of 2014/2015:

The opinions of the people in charge of the hotel units indicate that the next winter will register a clear increase of demand in the main touristic regions of the country.

North, Lisbon, Alentejo and Algarve expect that the winter of 2014/2015 will register better results when compared to the previous winter. What stands out is that the superior category establishments are the ones which reinforce the growth tendencies.

Portugal shows expectations of growth in Lisbon and stable results or even better in the rest of the regions of the country.

¹⁸ Instituto Nacional de estatísticas; Estatísticas do turismo 2012 ; editor: Instituto Nacional de Estatística, I.P ; Ano 2013; ISBN 978-989-25-0205-2; pagina 4

¹⁹ Instituto Nacional de estatísticas; Estatísticas do turismo 2013 ; editor: Instituto Nacional de Estatística, I.P ; Ano 2014; ISBN 978-989-25-0267-0; pagina 4

The United Kingdom stands out as a market that will clearly reinforce its performance in the regions of Algarve and North and eventually in Lisbon, with bigger incidence in the most qualified units. Spain also has optimistic expectations in three regions where its representation is significant: North, Centre and Alentejo.

France tending to grow significantly in the North, Lisbon, Alentejo and Azores regions, opinion shared mostly by the 4 star units.

Brazil stands out in the Lisbon region as the most unanimous market to register an expressive growth.

5 star hotels in Madeira believe that the United Kingdom and Scandinavia may register growths in the region, despite the strong incidence in the option of not being possible to make predictions.

Summary of the main conclusions for the summer of 2015:

The summer of 2015 already shows clear expectations of demand growth in almost all the touristic areas of the country, featuring the North, Lisbon and Algarve.

Madeira is the only region where stability is, for now, the most likely scenario in terms of demand evolution for next summer. (...)²⁰

Tourism in the Rural Environment

If we analyse the philosophy of Rural Tourism we conclude that it consists of a set of activities connected to country life which are carried out in exchange for a salary, and whose main goal is to offer the tourist the opportunity to practice the values and traditions of the rural societies. This way it becomes essential to highlight that rural tourism is one of the solutions to ensure the rural economic revitalization.

Within the concept of rural tourism we have several classifications, which according to the Portuguese legislation (DL nº 15/2014, de 23/01) can be integrated in one of the following types:

- a) Hotel establishments;
- b) Touristic villages;
- c) Touristic apartments;
- d) Resorts;
- e) Enterprises of tourist housing;
- f) Enterprises of tourism in rural environment;
- g) Campsites and caravan parks;
- h) Enterprises of ecotourism.

²⁰ Turismo de Portugal, IP; Barómetro de Conjuntura Inverno 2014/15 Estabelecimentos Hoteleiros, Aldeamentos e Apartamentos Turísticos; editor Proturismo; Ano 2014; pagina 3

As it was mentioned at the beginning of this article, this refers to a project of rural tourism, more specifically agro-tourism. This client's will emerged from the possibility of applying for PRODER funding to create jobs, which include his own as a businessman, and hence allow the advertising of the region and its traditions, since the interior keeps being insufficiently explored in what this type of concept is concerned.

Bearing in mind all of these factors, and mainly the increase of international demand for Portuguese tourism, the Grape House project is born. A main unit, a biological swimming pool with its own backup structure (restrooms, lockers area and first-aid post) and two adjacent buildings connected to the pool are part of this project.

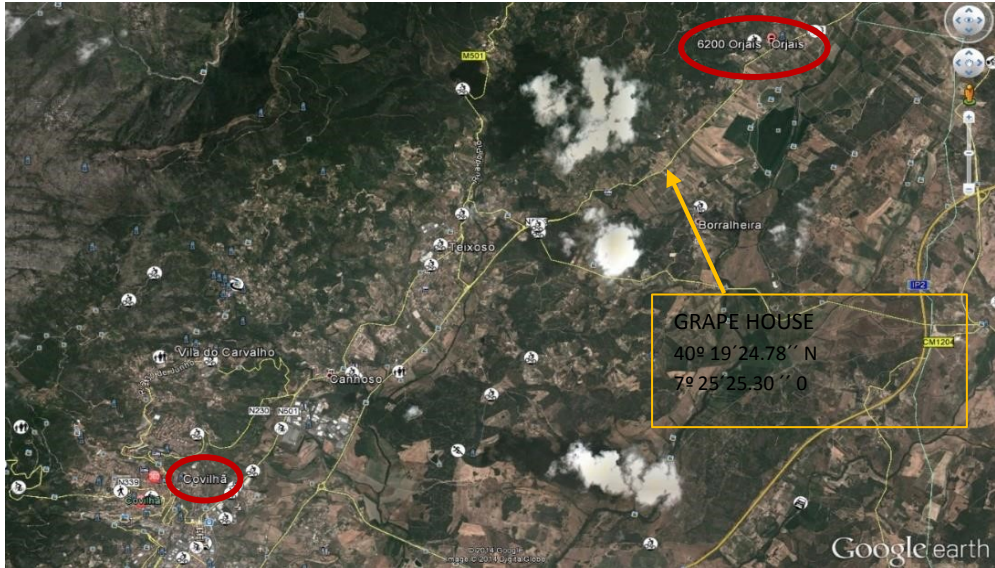
In what the main unit and its functions are concerned, it will be ready for production, transformation and trading of agricultural products produced in the complex, as well as to use these products to cook tasting menus.

Likewise it is intended to advertise other regional producers through partnerships or even by organising events as, for example, fado nights and handicraft exhibitions, among others.

The two adjacent buildings connected to the pool will be used as private apartments, each one of them composed by two bedrooms, one toilet, one pantry and a kitchenette.

The rest of the program refers to the terrain which will shelter the agricultural production itself, approximately 11.400 m², composed by 15 plots.

Images from the site as well as 3D images of the Grape House project are presented below



Picture 1: Location of the Grape House, between the city of Covilhã and the village of Orjais Source: Google Earth, accessed on 7th January 2015



Picture 2: Set of photos of the existing
Source: Taken by the author on 3rd September 2014



Picture 3: Set of 3D images of the proposal
Source: Elaborated by the author on 6th December 2014



Picture 4: Set of 3D images of the proposal
Source: Elaborated by the author on 6th December 2014



Picture 5: Set of 3D images of the proposal
Source: Elaborated by the author on 6th December 2014

Conclusion

The elaboration of this project had a double personal satisfaction. On one hand the client is a relative of mine, on the other hand I had the opportunity to learn about this topic which is new to me.

After analysing the legislation for this type of enterprise, the several cases of rural tourism existing in the country (not many), and mainly after getting to know better the region where this project is supposed to be installed, it becomes very clear that there is a gap that needs filling as soon as possible.

There is an enormous potential that is not being capitalized, it is necessary to advertise our traditions and our people's manners better. It is urgent to preserve some natural sanctuaries, not only in a cultural way but as a handle of economic development in the regions where it is applied.

It would be interesting, in case it didn't exist, to create some sort of program in schools to advertise these regions which so rich in History and natural landscapes, because it could be an effective methodology to transmit the existing values, and therefore raising a future generation that pays more attention to the potentiality that Portugal possesses.

To conclude I would really like this project to make a difference in advertising Beira Interior, more precisely the area between Covilhã and Orjais, because I am certain that it is a radical life change in all its aspects, at least in a personal way (client).

Final Note: This article was translated into English by Wall Street Institute (Covilhã)

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