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A participant observation methodology to analyse social functions, gender, class, and gastronomic practices in food-centric organizations: From the Gastronomic Societies in San Sebastián to the world

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ABSTRACT

Departing from the Gastronomic Societies in San Sebastián, Spain, we propose a scientific, scalable, method for participant observation in civic and cultural arenas where gastronomy is the key connector between members (such as gastronomic confraternities, diaspora organizations, "casas regionales", "peñas", among others). This model combines a structured combination of qualitative methods like ethnography, that comprises interviews and a field diary, netnography, focus group(s), questionary(ies) and bibliographic review with archives searching. An adjustable framework on the objectives, research question and hypothesis are also presented. Besides, the model also comprises recommendations regarding the research steps ("working packages"), a risk management plan, the selection of a facilitator, the way to create trust and address serendipity, as well as it draws recommendations on research validation of tools by experts, followed by pilot testing guidelines.

1. Introduction

San Sebastián is one of the most attractive places for gastronomic tourists in Spain (Romero, 2022). In 2005, gastronomy was the first motivation for leisure tourists visiting the city (Gobierno Vasco, 2005) (see Tables 1–7).

In this gastronomic ecosystem, an institution escapes the eyes of the regular gastronomic tourist in the city: the Gastronomic Societies. There are more than one hundred of these organizations that promote culinary conviviality and commensality in San Sebastián, building a common gastronomic and cultural sense of belonging.

Holding a long history, those organizations perform a reserved, although public, transparent work (participating in the organization of public events such as "Tamborrada"). However, they are reserved institutions, in which only members and guests could enter. As a social debate is ongoing regarding women's acceptance as full members and regarding the favouritism in accessing those Societies, analysis on their social functions, gender, class, and power issues are crucial.

But, gastronomy, as a key element that provides identity sharing and interpersonal connections based on common ground experiences and significances of food (Crowther, 2018; Osipova, 2014) could also be found in many other arenas of socialization linking individuals in food-centric organizations where food serves as a significant focal point in their cultural activities and interactions. Departing from this scenario, a proposal of a qualitative multi-technique research model, based on ethnography and participant observation, is proposed. The main goal of this article is to share a replicable research framework, and perhaps the objective of this work might seem a bit ambitious. Nevertheless, it should be understood as a proposal and a structured tool for the execution of future empirical studies on food-centric organizations. This is, however, the novelty aspect of this paper: to open new avenues of study to food behaviors of sociocultural aspects in different communities. As such, its structure follows an unconventional approach that emphasizes the methodological aspects.

2. Literature review – Drawing an example of the state of the art, from the case study of the Gastronomic Societies of San Sebastián

A state-of-the-art is the departing point to critically assess a topic's *status quo* (Bengochea and Levín, 2012). Hence, taking the example of Gastronomic Societies of San Sebastián, they are public non-profit cultural organizations under Spanish law in which their members gather to

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cook and eat together. They exist mostly in the Basque Country and date back to the 19th century (Hess, 2007). Notwithstanding, they are a relevant gastronomic stakeholder in a very particular gastronomic setting (Albéniz and Galarraga, 2022) as well as in a particular socio-economic, political, educative, historic, demographic, and cultural context (Estévez, 2007; San Miguel, 2019). The Directory of Gastronomic Societies[1] indicates that there are 127 Societies in San Sebastián, out of a total amount of 1561 Societies in the Basque Country (7,7%), counting 18253 total members, despite the existence of Societies that do not disclose the number of members. From the revealed number, the average number of members is 198, underlining that there are Societies with more than two thousand members while others with only twenty-two. Besides their full-right participation in public events, like "Tamborrada", reinforcing their active role in the local gastronomic ecosystem, Societies work consists in keeping culinary relations and facilities, run on a trust-basis, allowing the practice of commensality, here understood as the act of eating together giving significance to "sharing" in eating practices (Jönsson et al., 2021; Albéniz and Martínez, 2006), while promoting conviviality to stabilize and reinforce social ties (Albéniz and Martínez, 2006), being the most important part of the Societies' life (Hess, 2007). However, a social debate is ongoing regarding their gender and access dynamics, since the majority of them do not accept women as full members,[2] originating a debate around "gender equality" and "association" rights (Gobierno Vasco, 2010). Nevertheless, an institutional and social pressure[3] has been registered leading to the adoption of gender equality practices (Moral et al., 2014). With regard to the acceptance of new full members, the access to some of those Societies on a hereditary basis persists.[4]

Those dimensions, led to the development of a broader research model that adapts to the analysis of food-centric organizations cultural models such as (but not limited to) Gastronomic Confraternities and diaspora organizations, "casas regionales", "peñas", among others, in which food plays an important role in identity sharing, while performing certain non-state paradiplomatic efforts, either official or unofficial, to publicly promote regional or national cultural exchanges using gastronomy (D'Encarnação, 2012; Góis and Marques, 2023; Paquin, 2020).

3. Methodology – Setting the scene for the ethnographic model

In social sciences, a model represents a "set of relationships making it possible to explain and understand a given phenomenon (…) [departing from, at least] two variables [resulting] in a hypothesis based on a theoretical framework and/or empirical observations from previous research" (adapted from Roussel et al. *in* El Yamani and Moutmihi (2019).

Fig. 1 presents a summary of the model for participant observation on food-centric organizations where food plays a connective role between their members, allowing structured analysis on their social functions, gender, class, and gastronomic practices. This model could be adjusted to allow intra-organizational analysis or in-between organizations analysis. A brief explanation on each step is provided below.

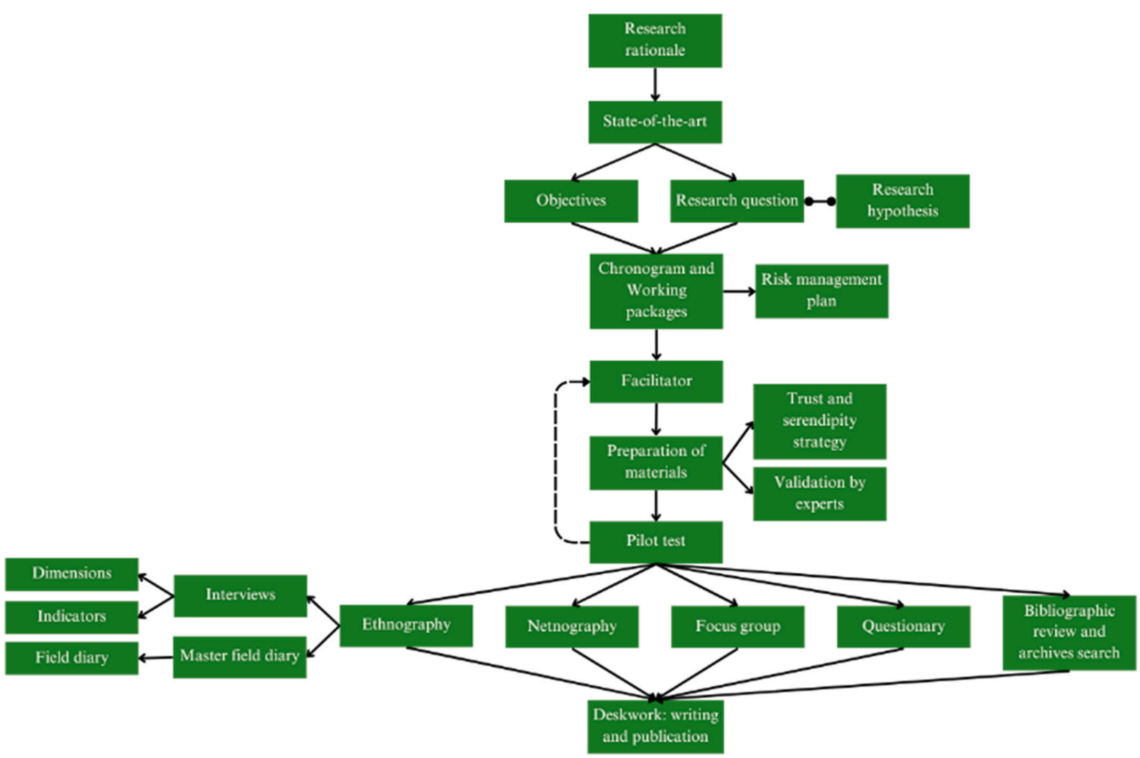

Fig. 1. – *Summary of the model for participant observation. Source: Authors' elaboration.*

[1] *Vd.* *http://www.sociedadesgastronomicas.com/sociedades_listado.php* (accessed July 18th, 2023).

[2] *Vd.* An example at http://www.sociedadesgastronomicas.com/sociedad.php?secc=1&id=1605 (accessed July 18th, 2023) in the "Women and society" submenu stating that "Right now the women access as full members is banned".

[3] *Vd.* https://elpais.com/sociedad/2020/01/19/actualidad/1579433114_077357.html (accessed November 2nd, 2023).

[4] *Vd.* http://www.sociedadesgastronomicas.com/sociedad.php?secc=1&id=1605 (accessed July 18th, 2023) in "Becoming a member" tab: "To become part of the society one needs that a place would become available (voluntary departure, dead, …) and (…) endorsed by three full members. They will present the application on the assembly and if it is approved one becomes full member (…)."

3.1. Setting the research objectives

Research's main goal is to understand the relevance, context, and indoors aspects with regard to class, gender, social functions and gastronomic identity/commensality in the practices and speech of a food-centric organization (hereinafter "researched organization(s)" or "RO(s)"), in which gastronomy plays a pivotal role in the sociability of its members.

This main goal comprises secondary goals: 1) to analyse the socio-demographic and economical descriptors of the RO(s) members; 2) to describe the status on gender inside the RO(s); 3) to describe the social functions of the RO(s); 4) to analyse the RO(s) in terms of gastronomic practices (ingredients, dishes, culinary techniques, knowledge and meal sharing) as operators of a shared gastronomic identity; 5) to understand commensality and conviviality in the RO(s).

3.2. Setting the research question(s) and hypothesis

The research question for the model is: "How do the RO(s) address class, gender, social functions, and what gastronomic identity/commensality acts do they perform and how are those dimensions represented in their speech and practices?" and on the following research hypothesis: "The RO(s) is/are a reproduction mechanism of social hierarchies, based on class and gender, which is registered through their speech and practices when fulfilling their social mission: to provide a space for community-building and socialization through gastronomic practices expressing a [territorial, community] identity, deeply rooted in local gastronomic culture, traditions and history".

3.3. Arranging a facilitator

In a participant observation, the facilitator is someone that could both "open the doors" or introduce the researcher to the subsequent people and/or institutions that he/she might need to contact "legitimising the researcher presence" (Scheyvens, 2014, p. 106). The facilitator will act as a "gatekeeper" and should be a very well-informed person, ideally part of the RO. Besides the advisory role in the research, the facilitator serves as a connecting person with the RO, both leaders and members. To avoid conflicts of interest, this person should not be part of the research, except for pilot testing (below).

3.4. Research time, working packages and risk management

This research would be composed of four main Working Packages (WP). The WP1 "Research preparation", WP2 "Fieldwork and participant observation – RO", WP3 "Fieldwork and participant observation – secondary RO" (if applicable), and WP4 "Deskwork and preparation for publication". All the WP would have associated tasks that will contribute to accept or reject the working hypothesis.

3.4.1. Time concerns

Regardless of the nature of the research objective (RO), this model requires a medium/long duration of research (1 year for a single RO and 2 years for multiple ROs is recommended). This timeframe allows for a thorough and unhurried approach to the planned work and data, enabling the establishment of strong relationships and setting trust. Additionally, within this timeframe, the researcher can observe periodic special events related to the RO, facilitating the development of robust conclusions. To ensure an effective research time management, we recommend the creation of a "Gantt" chart, easing the outlining and adjusting of tasks. This visual representation allows for tracking interdependencies, project paths, and facilitates task rearrangements (Taxén and Lilliesköld, 2008).

3.4.2. WP1 – research preparation

The first WP would be operationalized with the following tasks:

a. Bibliographic review and archives visiting.
b. Netnography on the RO (that should be kept until WP3).
c. Organize participant observation at the RO with immersion days and special event preparation days.
d. Identification of facilitator
e. Development of interview.
f. Preparing the field diary
g. Defining secondary ROs (if applicable).
h. Developing the questionary to the secondary ROs and validation/quality control (if applicable).
i. Structuring the focus group sessions (location, rules, framework of analysis) (if applicable).
j. Contacting facilitators to raise awareness to the project.
k. Validation of the research tools: experts' panel/feedback, pilot-test/feedback.

3.4.3. WP2 - "Fieldwork and participant observation – RO"

The second WP would be operationalized in the following tasks:

l. To gain the trust – e.g., preparation of a researcher country's dinner with diversified members
m. Field visits to the RO in regular days and extraordinary days
n. Deployment of interviews to RO members.
o. Questionary application to RO president/leader.
p. Shadowing and participation of unique events

3.4.4. WP3 - "Fieldwork and participant observation – secondary RO"

The third WP is an optional one and should only be used if a practices comparison is sought in between different research organizations, although from the same type, including:

q. Deployment of focus groups sessions with secondary RO presidents/leaders.
r. Questionary application and answers collection.
s. Field visits to secondary RO (if needed).

3.4.5. WP4 – "Deskwork and preparation for publication"

The fourth WP would be operationalized in the following tasks:

t. Transcription of fieldwork notebook: general process, curiosities, patterns, trends analysis.
u. Analysis of questionaries: patterns and statistical analysis.
v. Transcription of interviews and validation.
w. Elaboration of the report on the focus group results and application of frameworks.
x. Additional bibliographic research (if required/needed).
y. Preparation of the correspondent scientific article(s) for knowledge sharing and transfer.
z. Selection of journal according to the scope.

3.5. Risk management plan

A risk management plan elaboration is highly recommended to deal with possible High, Medium, and Low risk situations, that could challenge the execution of overall research obliging the researcher to revisit the WP contents or to deal with lack of compromise/availability, respectively, envisaging contingency plans to address potential risks (Murray et al., 2011).

3.6. Research techniques and preparation of materials

Methodological techniques in the project are categorized into primary and secondary sources. Primary sources include participant observation utilizing ethnographic methods, interviews, questionnaires, and focus groups. Secondary sources encompass bibliographic review and netnography.

3.6.1. Ethnography

Ethnography, as the basilar method for this model, is a systematic approach to the research object, that follows a subsequence of seven principals proposed as proposed by Hammersley&Atkinson (*in* Feixa et al., 2020): 1) initial contact; 2) shock; 3) discovering the obvious; 4) break; 5) focusing; 6) exhaustion/frantic activity; 7) leaving. This method allows the researcher to describe the morphology of the object, on mental or real dimensions, but also its functionalism, in their behaviours, purposes or significance (Barandiarán, 1975).

Moreover, the researcher should seek legitimacy to become a "native participant", i.e., a participant observer (Guber, 2019). The success and richness of the anthropological work is attained when full involvement with the RO happens, namely in reserved activities, but also in the public ones. This "being one of them" approach is used to better understand the members way of behaving (Tilche and Simpson, 2017).

The ethnographic approach enables the understanding of the socio-economical and demographic situation, the social functions, and the gastronomic practices as operators of a gastronomic identity and the role of commensality/conviviality in the main RO. Interviews and fieldnotes resulting from observation are used as data collection mechanisms throughout the field visits to the RO.

3.6.1.1. Interviews as part of ethnography. Individual interviews, as part of the ethnographic method, are a primary source of information collection and should have an in-depth, non-directive and a semi-structured approach. Voice-recording the interview is suggested and throughout the interview, the researcher should apply an active listening ability to what the interviewee says, beyond the answers (Guber, 2019). The interview questions battery can meet the addition of new questions that arise from the interviewee answers. Remaining conscious about this flexibility demands the preparation of a pre-set list of topics or agenda to be explored during the interview (Adams, 2015; Guber, 2019; Jiménez, 2012). The interview script should be validated by experts and pilot-tested, reminding that the questions that imply factual data should come first, and opinion-based questions are asked towards the end of the interview to prevent interviewee fatigue. The researcher should pick an interviewees sampling method, although we recommend random-based methods in order to access non-prepared beliefs, thoughts, and answers, avoiding speech biases.

An interview script is suggested:

a) Dimension 1 – Sociodemographic information

The dimension 1 provides contextual and statistical data for analysis (Table 1).

b) Dimension 2 – Motivations

Dimension 2 provides information on the willingness/added value of belonging to the RO, aiming to understand representations of prestige, social positioning, or other factors (Table 2).

c) Dimension 3 – Social functions

The dimension 3 provides information regarding the social functions of RO(s) and social positioning/social relevance of belonging to a RO (Table 3).

d) Dimension 4 – Commensality/Conviviality

Table 1
Questions on the interview regarding sociodemographic information. Source: Authors' elaboration.

Indicators	Justification
A1) Date of entrance in the [RO]:	To understand how long member is socialized in the RO practices.
A2) Age:	Statistical analysis purposes.
A3) Level of Education: Basic/Secondary/Upper	
A4) Professional situation: Active/Retired/Unemployed	
A5) Monthly income:	
A6) Have Children? How old?	
A6.1) If they are adults, are they willing to join the [RO]?	Analyse hereditary entrance probability.
A7) Non-paid work per week (housework, etc.)	Understand the time spent in the RO.
A8) Amount of time spent in the [RO]? Per day/week.	
A9) What is your first memory in the [RO]?	To understand how members socialized with the RO phenomena, creating rapport.
A10) Are you part of other association or group? (Religious, civic, cultural, …)	To understand sociability scenarios of the interviewee.
A10.1) If respondent is part of other association/group, what are the connections between them?	To understand m**embers** sociability arenas.

Table 2
Questions on the interview regarding motivations. Source: Authors' elaboration.

Indicators	Justification
B1) Why did you decide to enrol in the [RO]?	To understand self-motivations and representations of belonging to RO.
B2) How many people did you know in the [RO] before entering?	To understand exogenous motivations of belonging to RO.
B3) What is the main purpose of belonging to a [RO]?	To understand social representations of belonging to RO.
B4) How is it seen socially to be part of a [RO]?	To understand social differentiation of belonging to RO.
B5) What do you like the most about the [RO]?	To understand motivations to keep belonging to RO.
B6) What does the [RO] represents in your life?	To understand how deep the connection with the RO is.

Table 3
Questions on the interview regarding social functions. Source: Authors' elaboration.

Indicators	Justification
C1) Why is important that a [RO] exists?	To understand representations of the RO importance in the society.
C2) What are the main functions/roles of the [RO]?	To understand representations of the social important of RO' activities.
C3) In which part of the year do you enrol most in the [RO]?	To understand patterns of involvement in the RO.
C4) In which occasions do you come to the [RO]?	
C4.1.) If the person speaks about a special event: why do you involve yourself in the preparation of [event]?	
C5) In what other activities is the [RO] represented?	To understand the representations on the social significance of the RO.

Table 4
Questions on the interview regarding commensality/conviviality. Source: Authors' elaboration.

Indicators	Justification
D1) How often are you invited to eat/cook with others?	To understand practices of commensality.
D2) Do you often share your food with others?	To understand practices of sharing.
D3) How often do you invite others to eat/cook in the [RO]?	To understand the frequency of involvement of others on commensality processes.
D4) Who do you normally invite to eat with you in the [RO]? Other members, friends, family, strangers?	To understand the ties in the involvement of others on commensality processes.
D5) Do you invite more man or women to come to the [RO] to eat or cook with you?	To understand gender role in the involvement of others on commensality processes.
D6) If I was one of the invitees to dine with you at the [RO], how would you invite me?	To understand the involvement process of others on commensality processes.
D7) What is the average size of the groups you invite to cook/eat at the [RO]?	To understand commensality practices in the ROs.
D8) What is the difference of coming here to cook/eat or to go to a restaurant?	From a commensality point of view, what is the difference between those spaces?
D9) Is there any particular ritual at the [RO]?	To understand commensality rituals in the RO.
D10) Do you sing any particular song in the [RO] that you do not sing elsewhere?	
D11) Do you toast in any way that you do not do elsewhere?	
D12) Do you celebrate in any way that you do not do elsewhere?	
D13) What else do you do at the [RO]? (Games, music, …)	To understand conviviality further than food.

Table 5
Questions on the interview regarding gastronomic practices. Source: Authors' elaboration.

Indicators	Justification
E1) Where does the consumed food in the [RO] comes from?	To understand origins of foods (what part is cooked in-house, what part comes from outside).
E2) What do you do more in the [RO]: cook or eat?	To understand the degree of participation in the RO.
E2.1) If the person cooks more: how do you decide what you are going to cook?	To understand culinary practices in the RO.
E2.2) If the person cooks more: what are the three dishes or ingredients that you cook the most?	To understand main dishes and ingredients associated with the RO.
E2.3) If the person cooks more: who goes shopping normally?	To understand shopping practices in the RO.
E2.4) If the person cooks more: how often do you cook in the [RO]?	To understand culinary practices in the RO.
E2.5) If the person cooks more: For example, in a week how often do you invite others to eat what you cook?	
E2.6) If the person cooks more: How often do you eat alone in the [RO]?	To understand self-feeding practices in the RO.
E2.7) If the person cooks more: What are the differences of cooking in the [RO] vs. cooking at home?	To understand culinary differences between domestic and non-domestic environments.
E2.8) If the person cooks more: how long does it take for you to cook a meal for two people in the [RO]?	To understand culinary *momentum* in the RO.
E2.9) If the person cooks more: what do you do meanwhile you cook?	
E2.10) If the person eats more: how often are you invited to eat with others?	To understand culinary *protocol* in the RO.

Table 6
Questions on the interview regarding RO access. Source: Authors' elaboration.

Indicators	Justification
F1) Who invited you to become a [RO] member?	To understand hierarchies between members.
F2) What is the profession of your endorsers?	To understand social positioning of the endorsers and linkage.
F3) Were your endorsers part of the Direction board?	To understand RO's positioning of the endorsers.
F4) How did you become a member of the [RO]?	To understand self-involvement in the RO.
F5) What do you think about the restrictions to enter in this [RO]?	To understand field-level on criticisms about entering the RO.
F6) Until when do you plan to stay in the [RO]?	To understand how deep the connection between interviewee and RO is.
F7) To whom would you think to pass your place in the [RO]?	To understand which kind of hereditarian process is in place.
F8) Which kind of person would you feel comfortable to endorse to him/her enter the [RO]?	To understand patterns and/or prejudices on invitations.
F9) With whom did you learn how to cook?	To understand the degree of RO's importance in the culinary/taste socialization.
F10) What did you learn here in the [RO]?	To analyse the existence of culinary heritage-sharing in the RO.
F11) Did you teach/learn any dish/technique here in the [RO]?	To analyse knowledge circulation degree in the RO.

Table 7
Questions on the interview regarding gender issues at the RO. Source: Authors' elaboration.

Indicators	Justification
G1) How difficult is it to a woman a becoming [RO] full member?	To understand social representation or opinion on gender affairs in the RO.
G2) What do you think about the "closedness" in terms of gender that is pointed to [RO]?	
G3) What would change in [RO] if woman would join them?	To understand the openness degree of members.

The dimension 4 provides information on commensality/conviviality practices (Table 4):

e) Dimension 5 – Gastronomic practices

The dimension 5, provides information on Gastronomic practices, provides information on culinary protocols/recipe and knowledge sharing, culinary skills, meal preparation (shopping, selection of recipes, beverages, ingredients usage) on the RO(s) (Table 5).

f) Dimension 6 – RO access

The dimension 6, provides information on RO access method (Table 6).

g) Dimension 7 – Gender issues and access to women

The dimension 7, provides information on gender and women access and participation in the RO (Table 7).

3.6.1.2. Field diary typology of notes. A field diary should be used as a secondary type of information. Besides the daily observations, fieldnotes should comprise the information on "Date, time, and place of observation", "Specific facts, numbers, details", "Sensory impressions: sights, sounds, textures, smells, tastes", "Personal responses to the act of

Field notebook sheet #...		
Research:		Researcher:
Date:	Hour:	Place:
Agenda		Points to analyse today/People to meet
...H... -		
...H... -		
...H... -		
...H... -		
Notes on the today's agenda		
Other notes:		
Register of particular information that I listened, watched behaviours, sensorial, etc.		
How was people's reception to my fieldwork?		
From the work I had to realize today, I feel... (An insider, an outsider, happy, realized, sad, frustrated, ...)		
Things to fulfil in the next field day:		
		Page #1

Fig. 2. Simulation of a field diary note sheet. Source: Authors' elaboration.

recording fieldnotes and how others watch you as you watch them", "Specific words, phrases, summaries of conversations, and insider language", "Questions about people or behaviours at the site for future investigation", "Continuous page-numbering system for future reference" (Chiseri-Strater and Sunstein, 1997, p. 83, p. 83). A field diary suggestion is presented on Fig. 2. A master field notebook should be kept, given the length of the project. It should look like a progress report that is complimented with the obtained fieldnotes and will serve to keep track on the project advancements.

3.6.2. Netnography

Netnography, as "a qualitative, interpretive research methodology that adapts traditional ethnographic techniques to the study of social media" (Kozinets, 2015) allows the collection of RO(s)' online speeches, contents, and projections, that are frequently found in their social media accounts/websites taking advantage from well contextualized information (idem). It is suggested to promote a netnography to support the "traditional" ethnography method.

3.6.3. Focus group

A focus group, as a primary source of information collection, consists in "a group of individuals selected and assembled by researchers to discuss and comment on, from personal experience, the topic that is the subject of the research" (Powell and Single, 1996, p. 499). This technique, that should also be designed and validated, could be applied to understand the phenomena connected with the description of gender issues in the RO and/or secondary RO.

In organizations like Gastronomic Societies in San Sebastián, a big debate is going on regarding gender. Thus, by gathering gastronomic societies representatives, the researcher could also see frictions, tensions and points of agreement, but also appraise the interview meta-data and "consider the actual words used and their meaning, (…) the context, (…) the frequency and extensiveness of comments, (…) intensity of comments, (…) internal consistency, (…), specificity of responses, (…) extensiveness (and) big ideas" (Rabiee, 2004, p. 658).

Focus group sessions should be limited to 1 h and include up to 8 people (Adams, 2015; Rabiee, 2004).

The facilitator can assist in determining which secondary RO(s) to address. To ensure robust results, we recommend considering the following criteria: 1) Diversity in membership size (including small, medium, and large ROs), 2) Varying degrees of involvement in the gastronomic/cultural ecosystem, and 3) Years of continuous work by the RO.

3.6.4. Questionary

Questionnaires, as primary sources of information, should be designed, validated, and applied to gather socio-demographic and economic from the main or secondary RO(s). They should include open, closed, and categorized answer options, utilizing measurable Likert scales or True/False questions, to gauge agreement levels efficiently and collect open-ended answers (Nemoto and Beglar, 2014).

3.6.5. Bibliographic review and archives searching

Bibliographic review and archives search as secondary sources of information, have a supportive role on the research namely in the elaboration of state-of-the-art and in WP1. Searching different databases on academic works, that could be territorially or thematically associated with the RO, is essential. Also, local libraries catalogues should be researched to detect local publications and local, commercial, grey literature, giving its importance in the daily communication of the ROs (Paez, 2017). Regarding the archivistic material, it is highly advisable to access both e-archives catalogue and conventional archives when searching for RO(s) records (Scheyvens, 2014).

3.7. Trust and serendipity issues

Trust is crucial in social anthropology research projects. It must be maintained throughout project development to establish confidence and obtain unbiased reports (Hamal, 2020). The researcher should build fond relationships with the members of the RO(s) and organize an activity, such as a dinner showcasing the researcher's native cuisine. This fosters transparency and good faith, establishing a strong foundation for the research process (idem).

Despite the well-organized nature of ethnography, it can yield "unsought findings" that can be beneficial to the research (Van Handel in Rivoal and Salazar, 2013). Therefore, it is highly recommended that the researcher embraces and analyses serendipitous events, integrating them as valuable insights in the research process (Tilche and Simpson, 2017).

3.8. Validation by field experts

Research tools need scientific or expert validation to ensure reliable data collection and research validity. If a tool has not been validated yet, it should undergo validation by an expert panel. Experts provide robustness to the tool by assessing its sufficiency, clarity, coherence, and relevance (Escobar-Pérez and Martínez, 2008). The panel should overlook the scripts in terms of cultural sensibility, robustness of words and ideas. The expert panel should consist of at least 5 members, with an additional 2 supplementary members, to address any impossibilities that may arise, and validate the interview, focus group and the questionary scripts. Experts should possess a balanced, multidisciplinary profile, with academic and ethnographic experience, alongside with expertise in the research topic (e.g., 1 publication in the field) (idem).

The researcher should note and reintegrate informal experts' comments into the scripts. Also, it is important to statistically assess experts' agreement in order to improve interviews and questionnaires scripts. Kappa analysis on SPSS could be used to determine experts' agreement levels and to identify elements for rejection when no agreement is reached (Escobar-Pérez and Martínez, 2008).

3.9. Pilot testing

Before implementation, the researcher should perform a pilot test both for the interview and the questionary aiming for their improvement on quality and reliability (Chenail, 2011). Since the facilitator owns the needed knowledge of the RO, the facilitator could elaborate on questions clarity aspects (used language, technical aspects, etc.) as well as on any sensible content (vocabulary, taboos, etc.). By the end of the pilot test, the researcher should ask if some question was missing or needs restructuration.

3.10. Statistical analysis

The findings could be statistically analysed using both quantitative data (from closed questionnaires) and qualitative data (from interviews). Statistical analysis can be conducted either using Microsoft Excel (e.g., for the generation of bar charts for Dimension 1 of the interview to analyse sample distribution by age, education level, etc.) or by using SPSS descriptive statistics to describe the sample and collected data. Open-ended questions may be codified into Likert scales if necessary for interpretation. For qualitative data analysis, software like NVivo or AtlasTI can assist in categorizing answers, reducing diversity and uncertainty in open-ended questions. Following, non-parametric inferential tests could be performed on SPSS to achieve different data understandings. A Shappiro-Wilk test could be carried out to test if data distribution is normal, for small sample sizes ($n < 50$) or Kolmogorov Smirnov test for bigger sample sizes ($n \geq 50$) (King and Eckersley, 2019; Mishra et al., 2019). Bar charts can be used to visually present the data. Additional statistical tests, such as Spearman correlation, can be performed to examine relationships between variables within the same sample.

4. Conclusions

The rationale behind this model resides on the fact that gastronomy acts as an operator of culture, approximation and identity sharing in food-centric organizations. Departing from Gastronomic Societies model in San Sebastián, the analysis model has been designed to adapt to other organizations that perform socialization activities regarding a certain country/region culture, where food and sociability are keen to their agenda success. In this model, the researcher, finds a structured and systematized way to attain results in terms of intra-communitarian practices on class, gender, commensality, and gastronomic practices, but also social functions of those organizations. Although the model has not been applied yet, the model has been designed to be scalable and adjustable to the researching object needs when studying only one organization or more.

All the involved research techniques are articulated to promote this broader understanding leading the researcher to the appropriate scientific manuscript writing. It is advised to submit the model tools to a validation of experts and to pilot test all the information gathering techniques.

Implications for gastronomy

The model brings an articulated way of studying food-centric functions and social aims, generating knowledge on class, gender, commensality, and gastronomic practices.

Author contributions

Methodology, writing and article preparation: O.C., Review, methodological insights and supervision: P.O. Final review, and supervision: R.M. All authors have fully read and agreed to publish this manuscript.

Declaration of competing interest

There are no conflicts of interests. This is an original, theoretical work that has only been submitted to this Journal.

Data availability

No data was used for the research described in the article.

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