

## OLIVE TOURISM IN RURAL AREAS. A CASE STUDY IN SPAIN

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*The significant role played in recent years in different gastronomy and beverages tourism destinations has also meant a potential commitment to the development of other similar types of tourism, such as olive tourism, being creating this typology especially in Mediterranean countries where are the major producing areas of the world. The aim of this paper is to contribute to progress in the analysis of tourism demand in the field of olive tourism by presenting the results of a fieldwork in Spain. The methodology used in this research involved conducting surveys to*

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*passengers at the time of his visit to mills, olive oil interpretation centres and thematic museums related to olive oil. The results of this research indicate that tourists especially value their rural activity, the satisfaction with their visit to this destination and the relationship, in addition to agriculture activities, culture due to the important heritage elements.*

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**Keywords:** *Olive tourism, Demand, Rural Areas, Spain, tourism, food and beverage tourism.*

## INTRODUCTION

Food and beverage tourism is one of the fields that is most discussed in the academic literature in recent years (Björk & Kauppinen-Räsänen, 2016; Okumus, Koseoglu & Ma, 2018). In this sense, the number of investigations dealing with the study of wine tourism in different parts of the world has increased substantially; these investigations examine the relationship between tourism and wine from different aspects (Marzo-Navarro & Pedraja-Iglesias, 2012). Furthermore, food tourism is also addressed by different research and from different angles (Lee & Scott, 2015). Food and beverage has been completed with research in other subject areas among which are beer tourism (Kraftchick, Byrd, Canziani & Gladwell, 2014) and olive tourism (López-Guzmán, Cañero Morales, Moral Cuadra & Orgaz-Agüera, 2016).

Focusing on olive tourism in recent years this type of tourism is undergoing a strong development both in different Mediterranean countries, traditional place of production of olive oil, and in other countries around the world. Olive oil is an important agricultural commodities in the economy of countries from different geographical areas, especially those located in the Mediterranean area, Europe, Africa and the Middle East. In fact, according to Namdar, Amrani, Getzou & Milewski (2015), there is evidence of the use of olive oil in Israel in the fifth and sixth millennia BC as they have found traces of olive oil in vessels found in archaeological excavations. Olive oil is one of the main ingredients in the

Mediterranean diet, declared Intangible Cultural Heritage by UNESCO in 2010, since it is a key element in cooking the culinary resources of this area. Moreover, olive oil, together with its contributions to cuisine, also is a socio-cultural and anthropological component of certain regions, nationalities and countries (Alonso & Krajsic, 2013) and it can be identified as a gastronomy culture and it can good from the importance acquired by food in relation to hospitality and tourism (Lee & Scott, 2015; Yeoman & McMahon-Beatte, 2016). Similarly, olive oil is not only a culinary product but also reflects the culture, knowledge and idiosyncrasy of certain towns and is crucial for economic, ecological and even tourist development. (Ruiz Guerra, 2010).

The main objective of this paper is to present the results of a research conducted to determine the motivations and perceptions of tourists, taking into account their socio-demographic profile both domestic tourists and foreign tourists. The fieldwork has been carried out through a survey of visitors to olive oil mills, olive oil museums and olive oil interpretation centres in the region of Andalusia (Spain), and more specifically in the provinces of Córdoba and Jaén, provinces that are the main olive oil producers worldwide.

## **THEORETICAL BACKGROUND**

The concept that defines the relationship between rural areas, olive oil and tourism takes different terms in academic literature such as olive tourism, oleotourism, olive oil tourism, agritourism, or, even, olive-based agritourism (López-Guzmán et al., 2016). Some authors (Ruiz Guerra, 2010) even consider that olive tourism is also an important manifestation of cultural tourism. Olive tourism development is based on the significant role played by food and beverage tourism, especially wine tourism (Alebaki & Iakovidou, 2011; Byrd, Canziani, Hsieh, Debbage & Sonmez, 2016), and whose analysis contributions and research are serving as the basis to articulate the development of olive tourism.

The scientific literature in this field deals with the first studies on olive tourism in Australia (Alonso & Northcote, 2010; Alonso, 2010; Northcote & Alonso, 2011). And after that, it is developed to Europe, specifically to Italy, Portugal, Spain (Ruiz Guerra, 2010; Murgado, 2013; De Salvo, Hernández-Mogollón, Di-Clemente & Calzati, 2013; Campón-Cerro, Di-Clemente, Hernández-Mogollón, De Salvo & Calzati, 2014; López-Guzmán et al., 2016; Millán Vázquez de la Torre, Arjona-Fuentes & Amador-Hidalgo, 2017; Campón-Cerro, Folgado-Fernández & Hernández-Mogollón, 2017; Millán, Del Pópulo & Sánchez-Rivas, 2018) and Turkey (Uylaser & Türkben, 2017). Alonso & Northcote (2010) present the results of research based on field work carried out with 23 companies dedicated to the industry of the olive oil in Australia. These results show the relationship within rural tourism, food tourism and olive tourism, where the tourist destination, and the companies, is characterized by a combination of activities in rural areas, local agricultural products and landscape. Ruiz Guerra (2010) presents one of the first researches in Europe based on the fieldwork of the visitors for olive tourism in different places and focused the profile, the motivations and the perspectives of university students in relation to this kind of food and beverage tourism.

The development of olive tourism is enabling to open a new business and marketing opportunity for the agricultural products themselves related to olive oil (Alonso & Krajsic, 2013) in line with what happened, and widely discussed in the academic literature, (Alebaki & Iakovidou, 2011; Marzo-Navarro & Pedraja-Iglesias, 2012) in the wine and food tourism. However, currently the absence of researches in this typology of tourism within academic literature is manifest, due mainly to the little tradition of this typology of tourism in the business and to the shortage of empirical studies by academic literature (Alonso & Northcote, 2010). For these reasons, it is essential to increase olive oil-related research, specially in the Mediterranean countries. This also implies the relation of investigations that analyses the relations between the olive mills and activities for tourists. It is also important the relationship between

this type of tourism and the economical and cultural activities related with olive oil. Among others, we can highlight those related to the sale of olive products, or the study of how to structure and potential of the hospitality in these rural areas of visitors who are interested in olive oil tourism or, in general, as pointed by Ruiz Guerra (2010), in tourists activities related to these geographical areas and with the olive oil culture, integrated the concept of cultural tourism in the rural areas (Prat Forga & Cànoves Valiente, 2014). To do this, we believe that it could be used as a basis thematic and substantiation that has already been made both with wine (Alebaki, Iakovidou & Menexes, 2014; Byrd et al., 2016) and with cuisine tourism (Timothy & Ron, 2013).

In this sense, the development of this type of tourism represents the potential of the image of olive oil to the clients, specially to the foreign visitors, and at the same time, an increase of the added value for rural areas (Alonso & Northcote, 2010), and, similarly, both through an increased direct sales and recognition of this product and knowledge of the olive oil culture (Alonso, 2010) and its subsequent consumption in the places where travellers reside. Furthermore, it could make a positive contribution to the dissemination of the olive oil heritage as it is a beneficial activity from an economic, social and cultural point of view (Ruiz Guerra, 2010). Namely, and according to Alonso & Northcote (2010) the development this typology of tourism focused on olive oil could mean a potential benefit for different actors. Among other actors we could highlight the following: firstly, olive oil producers, who could find other ways of marketing their product and, at the same time, the development of complementary economic activities; secondly, visitors, because this type of tourism offers a different experience to the visitors and, even, the possibility of knowing a social and cultural heritage with strong Mediterranean roots; and thirdly, tourist services' enterprises, through the creation of complementary activities, such as restaurants, catering services, tourist accommodation or tourist routes.

The main issues on which we could develop olive oil tourism would be the following (Campón-Cerro et al., 2014): olive footpath, olive forests, gestures of olive, olive oil favours, and olive oil and beauty. Similarly, the main components in a tourist experience related with olive oil would be (Murgado, 2013): olive oil mill visits, olive oil tasting, purchase of olive oil, olive oil museum, culture, cuisine, popular festivals, landscapes and olive farms and, of course, heritage. Therefore, there are several complementary activities that olive tourism could develop, for example, the direct sale of oil olive, learning about the olive oil culture, visits to museum, mills and interpretation centres by tourists, tasting of olive oil, or gazing at landscapes of the rural geographical areas where it is located (Alonso & Krajsic, 2013). After that, for the development of this typology of tourism, the location of this geographical area is fundamental, for example, if you are near places with significant tourist flows (Northcote & Alonso, 2011).

Thus, currently, and according with Northcote and Alonso (2011), the principal tourists to these rural areas related with olive tourism come from coach tours, student groups and local community groups. It is also necessary to reinforce the characteristics of these geographical areas in order to receive people who organize their trip individually. Nevertheless, olive tourist routes are currently poorly developed due both to the existence of a limited number of tourist activities related with the olive culture and to the low development in terms of management and marketing of this type of tourism (Murgado, 2013). It would be a key factor for the development of this type of tourism considering the socioeconomic conditions of these places, the coordination level of partnership between public organizations and private enterprises and the strength of tourism services that exist in this place (Northcote & Alonso, 2011). In conclusion, the main problems for the development of this tourist activity are the following (Murgado, 2013): inexperience of personnel in relation to offer tourism service, specially in the rural areas (Vassiliades, Fotiadis & Piper, 2013), poor business infrastructure in the area, problems of cooperation between the

different enterprises and the public administration, lack of complete olive oil tourist products in the market to spark demand for this typology of tourism, and lack of interactive marketing and development to this product and, in general, to the geographical area where it develops.

As for the segmentation of tourists according to their nationality, distinguishing between domestic and international visitors, there are different studies related to the food and beverage tourism that analyse visitor segmentation in order to perform different exploratory studies. Thus, Alonso, Fraser & Cohen (2007) present the results of a research to determine the sociodemographic profiles of wine tourists in New Zealand segmented by nationality. Likewise, in the field of food tourism, Nam & Lee (2011) present a study on the satisfaction of international visitors in traditional Korean restaurants and Horng, Liu, Chiu & Tsai (2012) focus on the analysis of the perception of brand equity in international tourists.

## **DESCRIPTION OF THE GEOGRAPHICAL AREA**

The geographical area studied in this paper is the region of Andalusia in the South of Spain. Currently, Spain produces in relation to olive oil around 60% of world production. In Spain, the region of Andalusia currently provides just over 80% of the national total production. And over 60% of this national production comes from two provinces in this region, Córdoba and Jaén. According López-Guzmán et al. (2016), these two provinces annually provide a figure close to 35% of olive oil in the world production. These figures indicate the economic relevance of this primary economic sector in these two provinces and, in general, in the region of Andalusia. Similarly, this geographical area is very important in heritage tourism because the cities Córdoba, Úbeda and Baeza are World Heritage Site by UNESCO. For this reason, there is a significant increase in the relationship between the tourism, the

culture and the olive tourism is taking place (López-Guzmán et al., 2016).

Currently, there are in Spain related to olive oil 31 Protected Designations of Origin (PDO). This system of PDO allows us to recognize the own quality of this agricultural product, based on its own features and quality which each geographical area is different in Spain. For instance, in the province of Jaén are the PDOs of Sierra Magina, Sierra de Cazorla, and Sierra de Segura. And in the province of Córdoba are the PDOs of Priego de Córdoba Baena, Lucena, and Montoro-Adamuz.

In relation to the boosting of this typology of tourism in this region, again the provinces of Jaén and Córdoba are the ones which have most advanced in this type of tourism. In the province of Jaén, it has created a general route called oleotourism which addresses the existence of olive tourism from different scopes such as economics, development strategies, innovation, culture, olive oil and others agricultural products, marketing, and environment (Aybar León, 2004). And in the province of Córdoba planning of this type of tourism is carried out through the design, implementation and development of eight different olive routes covering in this province the different PDOs. Similarly, both proposals show the potential for the development of this typology of tourism both in the region of Andalusia and in Spain (Murgado, 2014).

## **METHODOLOGY**

The methodology used in this this research was based on a fieldwork investigation to know about different aspects of visitors interested in learning on the culture of olive oil, distinguishing between national and foreign tourists. To conduct this fieldwork, a face-to-face five-point survey was conducted to visitors in the provinces of Córdoba and Jaén. A convenience sampling was used. According to Finn, Elliott & Malton (2000), this type of analysis is



usually used in the tourism research where visitors are available to be interviewed in a specific time and place.

The survey used in this research is based on several previous studies about the olive oil and the food and beverage tourism (Alonso & Northcote, 2010; Alebaki & Iakovidou, 2011; Molina Moreno, Quesada Rubio & Ruiz Guerra, 2011; Horng et al., 2012; De Salvo *et al.*, 2013) and responds to three blocks of variables analysed during the visitor visit: firstly, socio-demographic profile of tourists; secondly, the motivations to visit these two provinces; thirdly, the satisfaction by tourists of different variables related with the destination and their perceptions about the olive product.

The fieldwork, based on surveys, took place between the months from April to November, 2014. Five survey points (museums, mills, and interpretation centres) were chosen in the major olive-growing areas of these two provinces. Tourists surveyed completed the survey completely independently and anonymously, although the interviewers were present in case they had some kind of help to complete it. The survey was distributed in four languages (Spanish, English, German and French). Previously, a pre-test of 30 surveys was conducted to detect possible errors and deviations. The total number of questionnaires returned was 423 surveys, of which 397 were valid. Of these, 43.5% were national tourists, while 56.5% are foreigners. Among the foreign tourists, French (49.58%), British (21.24%) and Germans (10.44%) stand out.

The items used in the survey are intended to respond to the objectives of this research. The number of items of this survey was 19. Thus, three different types of questions were used: first, questions based on a Likert scale of 5 points to assess the perceptions, the opinion and the evaluations of tourists; second, yes/no answers for the evaluations of certain aspects related with this destination where this places was located; and third, some questions, both closed and open, where visitors could make opinions their perceptions and their experience with this typology of tourism.

Due to the existence of few studies on olive tourism in the region of Andalusia, there is no reliable data available on the

number of tourists in this segment so we cannot determine an objective population.

The data collected was organized, tabulated and analysed using the SPSS 19.0 programme. Similarly, data processing was performed through the use of univariate and bivariate statistical tools.

## RESULTS OF THE INVESTIGATION AND DISCUSSION

Table 1 shows the demographic characteristics of respondent tourists, distinguishing between national tourists and foreign tourists.

According to Table 1, there are a greater number of women than men surveyed. Furthermore, in terms of age, two groups stand out, those under 30 and those over 60 years of age. We believe that this result is closely related to the fact that most respondent tourists have visited. The places where the fieldwork was carried out were through organized groups, so the amount of people visiting these places individually is very low. This result is similar to that obtained by Alonso (2010). As for professions, retired and professional persons stand out. In the first case, it is closely related to the respondent tourist's age. Regarding the level of education, both cases clearly show a university level, common in the results of other studies on food and beverage tourism (Alonso, 2010).

**Table 1.** Socio-demographic profile of the tourist

Variable	Variable	Domestic	International	Contingency coefficient (p-value)
Gender	Male	46.2%	40.4%	0.058 (0.251)
	Female	53.8%	59.6%	
Age	Under 30 years old	8.8%	21.5%	
	Over 60 years old			

	30-39 years old	11.7%	2.8%	0.382 (0.000) *
	40-49 years old	21.2%	1.8%	
	50-59 years old	18.1%	13.6%	
	60 years old or more	40.2%	60.3%	
Category Professiona l	Retired	31.1%	45.0%	0,313 (0.000) *
	Self- employed	19.8%	13.6%	
	Employee	17.4%	12.3%	
	Civil	15.0%	7.7%	
	Servant	12.0%	2.3%	
	Housewif e Student	4.8%	19.1%	
Level of education	Primary	21.1%	4.1%	0.278 (0.000) *
	Secondary	25.7%	43.1%	
	University	53.2%	52.8%	
Income	More than \$ 2,500	17.2%	43.4%	0.343 (0.000) *
	From \$ 1,501- 2,500	30.7%	35.3%	
	From \$ 1,001- 1,500	32.5%	17.3%	
	From \$ 700-1,000	11.0%	2.6%	
	Less than \$ 700	8.6%	1.4%	

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Source: Own elaboration

\* Correlation is significant at level 0.01

According to table 1, regarding the level of income, foreign tourists stand out as visitors who claim to have an income above € 2,500. Meanwhile, most national tourists have an income between € 1,000 and € 2,500. 82.3% of foreign tourists had never visited this geographical area, while 46.2% of Spanish tourists had not visited it before. As for the time spent in this geographical destination, most range between 3 and 7 days (Spanish tourists, 41.1%; foreign tourists, 51.3%). Spanish tourists mostly travel accompanied by a partner (43.5%) while foreigners with co-workers or friends (51.1%).

It is quite significant that 71.8% of Spanish tourists and 77.0% of foreign tourists consider a visit to the mill, to the interpretation centre or museum where the survey was conducted as part of their cultural experience. This result reinforces the conclusion drawn by Ruiz Guerra (2010) in the sense that this type of tourism is closely related to culture.

It is also interesting to note the fact that 81.8% of Spanish tourist respondents recognize that they consume olive oil daily, while this percentage decreases to 32.3% for foreign tourists. This is why we consider that olive tourism can be an interesting way for foreign tourists to learn of the beneficial effects of olive oil and then to consume this regularly in their country of origin.

As for the main motivations for the visit to this geographical area, where survey centres are located, these are set out in Table 2. These items were measured on a Likert 5-point scale, with 1- being very little and 5-very much. The reliability index according to Cronbach's Alpha of 0.725. In conclusion, the high rate of reliability obtained in this research reinforces the validity of the results (Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994). Again there is a difference between national and international tourists.

**Table 2.** Main motivations for visiting the geographical area

Variables	Tourist		F (signification)	Levene Statistic (signification)
	Domestic	International		
Knowing the geographical area	4.14	3.77	6.573 (0.011)	3.254 (0.072)
Learning about the world of olive oil	4.03	3.51	12.306 (0.001)	18.949 (0.000)
Eating and drinking traditional products	3.61	3.49	0.627 (0.429)	2.561 (0.111)
Relaxation	3.51	2.84	16.213 (0.000)	0.002 (0.966)
Spending a day out	3.47	2.73	16.012 (0.000)	1.097 (0.296)
Tasting different kinds of oil	2.58	3.09	8.603 (0,004)	0.618 (0.432)
Buying oil	2.52	2.72	1.302 (0.255)	0.223 (0.637)

Source: Own elaboration

According to table 2, the main reason for visiting this destination is getting to know the geographical area. Similarly, learning about the world of olive oil and eating and drinking the typical products of the area stand out. It is interesting to note the fact that buying olive oil is not a significant motivation to visit this destination. Perhaps an explanation for the low valuation of this motivation is the difficulty for tourists to transport olive oil by aircraft. In fact, this result has already been detected in other papers related with wine tourism (López-Guzmán, Vieira-Rodríguez & Rodríguez-García, 2014). Likewise, neither is tasting olive oil an important motivation; perhaps, unlike what happens with wine, given the little tradition that exists on this subject with olive oil.

As for the average equality stress tests regarding motivations, they are set out in Table 3.

**Table 3.** Equality stress test of average motivations for the visit

	Brown-Forsythe	g1	g2	Sig.
Knowing the geographical area	6,726	1	312,354	0,010
Learning about the world of olive oil	12,933	1	326,765	0,000
Eating and drinking traditional products	0,641	1	270,874	0,424
Relaxation	16,222	1	239,935	0,000
Spending a day out	15,969	1	237,446	0,000
Tasting different kinds of oil	8,715	1	281,932	0,003
Buying oil	1,309	1	270,298	0,254

Source: Own Elaboration

As for the ratings of different variables related with the tourist destination where the survey points are located, the main results are set out in Table 4. Once again it is used a Likert 5-point scale, with 1- being very little and 5-very much. For these items, the reliability index according to Cronbach's Alpha was 0.871.

According to table 4, Spanish tourists value the following elements in particular: hospitality, environmental conservation and public safety. Meanwhile, foreign tourists positively valued hospitality, cultural activities and restoration. This implies that this olive tourism also has a significant cultural component, consistent with the conclusion of Ruiz Guerra (2010). Similarly, the places under study, en in the provinces of Jaén and Córdoba, is located near three World Heritage Cities. Therefore, we consider it important to strengthen the cultural aspects of this type of tourism and relate it to gastronomic experiences and culture (Lee & Scott, 2015).

**Table 4.** Rating of different variables related to the tourist destination

Variable	Tourist		F (signification)	Levene Statistic (signification)
	Domestic	International		
Hospitality	4.53	3.96	30.925 (0.000)	16.838 (0.000)
Conservation of the environment	4.24	3.54	38.231 (0.000)	13.538 (0.000)
Citizen Safety	4.09	3.43	27.602 (0.000)	7.692 (0.006)
Cleaning	4.09	3.59	18.781 (0.000)	5.921 (0.016)
Restaurants	4.02	3.70	8.636 (0.004)	5.061 (0.025)
Olive oil mills	3.96	3.42	17.717 (0.000)	2.392 (0.123)
Price of the trip	3.93	3.19	36.527	6,698

			(0,000)	(0,010)
Information	3.86	3.27	21.923 (0.000)	3.008 (0.084)
Cultural activities	3.83	3.82	0.006 (0.937)	0.276 (0.600)
Communications	3.76	3.02	26.846 (0.000)	2.856 (0.092)
Accommodation	3.74	3.67	0.267 (0.606)	2.817 (0.094)
Shopping area	3.11	2.97	0.724 (0.396)	0.048 (0.826)

Source: Own elaboration

Regarding the degree of satisfaction, the main results are shown in Table 5 measured in a Likert 5-point scale, with 1-being very little and 5-very much.

**Table 5.** Satisfaction level

Variable	Tourists		F (signification)	Levene Statistic (signification)
	Domestic	International		
Satisfaction	4,38	4,06	13.464 (0,000)	1,114 (0,292)

Source: Own elaboration

According to the data of Table 5 we can see the satisfaction importance of both domestic and international tourists. Table 6 shows the average equality stress test with respect to satisfaction.

**Table 6.** Robust tests for equality of means variable of satisfaction

	Brown-Forsythe	g11	g12	Sig.
Satisfaction	13,906	1	372,590	0.000

Source: Own Elaboration



As to whether they would repeat the trip, 95.2% of national tourists say yes, while 77.6% of foreign tourists say yes (contingency coefficient = 0.240;  $p = 0.000$ ).

## **CONCLUSIONS**

The importance of food and beverage tourism, both in businesses and their supply and demand for it, has enabled to use this experience to improve other related rural products in different geographical areas. Olive tourism stands out among these, consisting in knowing the world of olive oil, as basic ingredient of the Mediterranean Diet as Intangible Cultural Heritage. In fact, the different Mediterranean countries, both in Africa and in Europe, are precisely the most important olive oil area in the world.

This paper presents the perceptions and opinions of visitors to the olive-growing areas of Andalusia. In this respect, it differentiates itself in the research between national and international visitor groups with the analysis of different attributes and showing significant differences between groups. This research aims to provide one of the first analysis in Europe of the academic literature regarding the motivation, the level of satisfaction and the socio-demographic profile of tourism demand in this geographical area with two different groups, domestic and foreign, the socio-demographic profile of visitors in places related with olive oil (such as mills, museums, and interpretation centres) is that of a person in adulthood, with a significantly high education and upper middle class. Similarly, it is very important the motivation of domestic and foreign tourists both to learn of this culture and to learn about the rural geographical area is reinforced. It has also been found that the olive tourism is associated to both the rural tourism and the cultural tourism, namely to the foreign travellers. Tourists consider visiting these places related to rural areas and in particular with olive oil as part of their own cultural trip and a good experience.

The main limitation of this research is that most of the visitors surveyed came to the different survey points, especially in mills, through tour groups or student groups, due to the underdevelopment of the individual tourists in the rural areas and where it is quite difficult to locate tourists who organize their own trip in order to visit museums, interpretation centres or mills. In fact, most of tourists that visit this area through groups who are managed by student groups or tour companies. Similarly, another of the main limitations of this research is that a convenience sampling has been used.

As future lines of research, we propose an investigation, especially in foreign tourists, to find out if visiting these rural sites has changed the purchase behaviour of these visitors in their own country, with respect to the consumption of olive oil and, above all, to the purchase of olive oil, and in general food product of this area, that comes from the rural areas they have visited in their trip to know and to learn in this places.

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