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A Decade of Olive Oil Tourism: A Bibliometric Survey

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Abstract: Olive oil tourism is a recent type of rural tourism; hence, it remains a field of research that is still overlooked. Therefore, it is fitting to provide a quantitative overview of the literature regarding this promising area. Drawing on an analysis of 42 articles on olive oil tourism indexed in the Web of Science, it becomes clear that olive oil tourism is predominantly a Spanish phenomenon, as the large majority of the authors are affiliated with academic entities located in Spain. The outlets with the highest number of papers published on olive oil tourism include Sustainability, Tourism and Hospitality Management, and the *International Journal of Gastronomy and Food Science*, which confirms the multidisciplinarity of this phenomenon. The demand approach and particularly the focus placed on tourists' psychological traits have garnered considerable attention. In contrast, the offer approach is still in an incipient stage, which hinders the understanding of the strategies used by the stakeholders in the field. Considering the potential that olive oil tourism represents for the sustainability of rural areas, there is a need for further research in the field, particularly focusing on the product itself and on institutional frameworks and governance.

Keywords: olive oil tourism; bibliometric survey; tourism sustainability

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1. Introduction

Sustainable tourism is an approach intended to reduce tensions created by the complex interactions between the tourism industry, visitors, the environment, and the communities hosting tourists. It takes into consideration the environment, the local community, and the local economy [1]. In this context, rural tourism, particularly through the enhanced value of local food, wine, and other local products, has proven its contribution to sustainable regional development [2].

Within this context, olive oil tourism emerges as a specific type of rural tourism linked to agriculture, the culture and the production of olive oil. Its expansion started in many regions as an alternative to complement agricultural income, thereby contributing to the development of rural areas by promoting small-scale, sustainable agriculture supporting local farmers and augmenting their earnings [3]. Consequently, it also assumes a prominent role in economic sustainability.

Moreover, olive oil tourism also contributes to environmental sustainability since olive groves are ecosystems that support biodiversity, providing habitats for various plant and animal species. Through environmentally friendly projects and sustainable olive oil production practices, such as organic farming and integrated pest management, olive oil tourism can help preserve biodiversity and maintain the health of the surrounding environment [4]. However, the contribution of olive oil tourism to sustainability does not finish here. From a sociocultural perspective, olive oil tourism helps to preserve the traditions of many rural communities and safeguard elements of the local industrial heritage, like oil mills, for instance, and the identity of those communities [4]. By promoting these cultural elements, olive oil tourism can contribute to the preservation of cultural heritage and traditional knowledge. This type of tourism is particularly developed in countries where olive trees represent the agricultural reality of the nation [5].

Olive oil tourism is, however, a recent field of study [6,7]. Consequently, the existing literature tends to be highly general and fragmented and, according to Pulido-Fernandez

et al. [5], excessively descriptive. Despite the existence of some comprehensive surveys on the state of the art [5,7], a more in-depth bibliometric-based survey has yet to be conducted in this area. Bibliometric analysis enables us to unravel the evolutionary nuances of a specific field of research, while casting light on the emerging areas within that field [8].

The purpose of the paper is, therefore, to clarify the evolution and current state of the research on olive oil tourism. Building on the contributions of Pato and Teixeira [9], the study is able to identify the most important contributors and their geographical distribution, as well as the major outlets where articles on olive oil tourism have been published, and the evolution of primary subject areas, key topics, main empirical methodologies, and countries analyzed. This analysis exposes the research gaps both in terms of the research topics and methodologies, which should be addressed in future studies. Additionally, the present study also presents some practical and managerial implications that should be considered in the future by stakeholders. Particularly, the study reveals that there is a need for more studies on the offer approach, particularly focusing on the olive oil tourist product and the intuitional support provided to stakeholders, in order to contribute to the sustainability of the region.

The paper consists of five parts. Following the Introduction (Section 1), Section 2 provides a review of the concept of olive oil tourism and its main topics. The methodological approach is explained in Section 3, while Section 4 presents and discusses the findings of the bibliometric exercise.

2. Literature Review

2.1. The Meaning of Olive Oil Tourism

Olive oil tourism, also known as oleotourism, oil tourism, agritourism, or olive-based agritourism, is a relatively recent type of rural tourism [10] that has been progressively evolving for approximately a decade, mainly in rural areas where olives and olive cultivation characterize the rural landscape [7]. While some consider that olive oil tourism is a manifestation of agritourism, it is also a manifestation of gastronomic or culinary tourism [10], health tourism [11], cultural tourism [10], and even slow tourism [12]. In that sense, it is conceived as a tourism activity that combines agriculture, food, wellness, culture, knowledge, and authenticity. It aligns with the principles of responsible and sustainable tourism and encourages a more thoughtful and considerate approach to exploring the region.

The aforementioned regions, particularly located in Mediterranean countries like Spain, Italy, Greece, Morocco, Turkey and Portugal, are seeking to diversify the economic activities of their farms, paving the way for oil tourism [13,14]. However, other countries, not traditionally recognized for olive production, such as the United States (US) [15], Argentina, Australia, Chile, and Japan, have also recently embraced olive oil tourism [5].

This is a type of Special Interest Tourism (SIT) [5] linked to the rural environment, the culture of the olive three, the gastronomy, and the traditions of rural life [10]. In this context, Parrilla-Gonzalez et al. [16] proposed four dimensions derived from the opinions of olive oil tourists regarding the aspects of the destinations they particularly appreciate. These dimensions are crucial for characterizing olive oil tourism as an SIT, and include (1) sustainability, (2) experience, (3) the promotion of the local culture, and (4) an image of prestige/status. The closer olive oil tourism aligns with these dimensions, the more likely it is to experience growth [16].

Olive oil tourism encompasses activities such as farm visits and experiences and the tasting of different types of olive oil [17], oil tastings in restaurants, tours of museums related to olive cultivation, the purchase of extra virgin olive oil from specialized shops [18], or visits to historic mills and modern olive oil production facilities [3]. Therefore, olive oil tourism can include multiple cultural and economic activities related to nature, local heritage, the environment, culture, and the traditions of the territory [19] in order to contribute to the economic, environmental, and sociocultural sustainability of the region.

While there is no specific profile for this type of tourist [19], oleotourists constitute a category of individuals interested in this particular form of tourism centered around olive oil [20]. They can be characterized as a type of tourist with a strong interest in the culture of olive oil and/or the gastronomic product [17]. Additionally, oleotourists do not only seek enjoyment during their visit to rural areas, but also seek personal enrichment [21]. They gladly engage in a series of complementary activities related to the cultivation of olive trees and olive oil in the olive-growing region [22].

Actually, olive oil tourism serves not only to foster learning about the cultural facets of the product, which increases tourists' knowledge [10], but also contributes to the sustainable development of rural areas [3,19,22,23]. For both businesses and residents, olive oil offers an alternative use for local resources, which can generate additional income through the creation of synergies related to olive oil culture [24].

In the literature focusing on olive oil tourism, it can be observed that particular attention is devoted to the relationship between the rise of this new form of tourism and the gastronomic traditions of rural territories. Actually, this type of tourism plays a significant role in promoting sustainable rural destinations capable of encouraging the consumption of local and gastronomic products, with a special emphasis on olive oil as an important element related to dietary habits [17].

Indeed, academic studies conducted on olive oil tourism highlight the importance of gastronomy and geographic indications, such as the Protected Designations of Origin (PDOs) and Protected Geographical Indications (PGIs) of olive oil, as factors that support the dissemination of this new form of tourism, the appreciation of local gastronomy, and the promotion of the territory [3].

2.2. Main Sub-Topics Explored in the Literature

The existing studies on olive oil tourism delve into distinct, yet interrelated, topics, highlighting a noticeable multidisciplinary trend in the approaches (ranging from aspects related to the demand and characteristics of tourists to issues related to the offer). The main topics identified, which go beyond the (1) theoretical background and olive oil tourism issues, include shifts from demand to offer approaches (cf. Table 1); (2) tourist demographic traits; (3) tourist psychological traits; (4) embeddedness; (6) rurality; (7) organization´s characteristics; and (8) residents´ perceptions.

Table 1. Olive oil tourism topics identified in the literature.

	Topic	**Sub-Topic**
Theoretical background	Olive oil tourism issues	
Demand approach	Tourist demographic traits Tourist psychological traits	Age, Origin, Gender Motivations, Needs, Expectations
Demand–offer approach	Embeddedness	Networks, Social Ties, Collaboration
Offer approach	Rurality	Physical, Social, Economic Characteristics
	Organization´s characteristics	Type, Perspectives, Innovation; Size; Market Development, Social Responsibility
	Residents' perceptions and support	Perceptions, Involvement, Support

Source: own elaboration based on literature reviews.

The section dedicated to theoretical background and olive oil tourism issues includes a literature review on this topic. Of the few existing studies on this topic, the one by Hernandez et al. deserves particular attention [7]. Here, the authors highlight the acceptance that this topic has received in scientific literature, with a specific focus on the contributions identified in journals related to the field of tourism marketing and management. Indeed, the

practice of olive oil tourism has emerged as a field akin to wine tourism that has embodied tourism innovation in recent years [22].

Tourist's demographic traits include aspects such as their demographic profile: age, gender, origin, income, employment, and academic degree. Obtaining information on the sociodemographic characteristics of tourists helps stakeholders, policy makers, and destination managers in their decision-making processes, as it allows them to adapt their products to match the profiles of tourists [13]. In this context, several studies provide valuable insights into these demographic traits using segmentation techniques. For instance, Aguera et al. [25] emphasized female oleotourists in Andalusia aged 60 years or over, who were foreigners, retired, with an upper-middle income, and held a university degree. Pulido-Fernandez et al. [18] stated that the evaluation of oleotourism experiences was related to tourists' educational background, employment, and age. Similarly, diverse authors [10,13] provide an interesting tourist segmentation approach, particularly based on psychological traits. Pulido-Fernandez et al. [13] divided olive oil tourists into four clusters: Cluster 1—Dabbler Olive Oil Tourists, Cluster 2—Experiential Olive Oil Tourists; Cluster 3—Half-Day Guest Olive Oil Tourists; and Cluster 4—Enthusiast Olive Oil Tourists. The implications of these results enabled professionals in the olive oil tourism sector to configure the offer in accordance with the needs and preferences of each segment and to design communication strategies with messages and actions tailored to each type of olive oil tourist [10].

Acknowledging that the research on olive oil tourism should not solely consider a facet of the phenomenon (demand or offer), some studies emphasize the importance of 'embeddedness´. This concept encompasses aspects such as networks and routes, social ties, and the relationships [9] between the demand and the offer. In this context, gastronomic routes constitute an interesting tool for positioning territorial products and associating them with quality. These routes should be seen as a product of rurality, and therefore form part of the rural tourism offered in the different territories [26]. To provide a more comprehensive and memorable experience to tourists, these routes should incorporate diverse stakeholders, such as producers, restaurants, oil mills, museums, as well as the local population.

From the offer side, some authors (e.g., [27]) highlight the 'rurality´ sub-topic. In traditional terms, it focuses on the environment and encompasses factors such as population density, economic activities, and landscapes [9]. That way, rural territories with a strong agricultural vocation, providing opportunities for contact with nature and the environmental contexts, communities, traditions, and local gastronomy, deserve to be highlighted when promoting singular experiences. In this context, olive groves as a tourist resource deserves to be considered [27].

The sub-topic 'Organization´s characteristics´ encompasses aspects such as the type of firm, perspectives, and motivations to invest in olive oil tourism, size, offer and innovation strategies, market development, and social responsibility. The typical profile of companies included in this sector consists of enterprises with the legal status of a cooperative, engaged in the production of olive oil and with a reduced dimension [19]. Casado-Montilla et al. [14] stated in their study on olive oil cooperatives in Andalusia that these organizations joined olive oil tourism because they deemed it crucial to promote olive oil culture, while contributing to the direct sale of the product and its derivatives. However, these authors also observed that a significant number of firms did not conduct market studies to adapt their offers to the preferences of tourists. Additionally, the authors also concluded that only a few cooperatives invested in hiring staff to manage this new requirement.

However, as in other forms of tourism, it is essential to garner the support of the local population to successfully develop this new form of tourism [7]. According to Campon-Cerro et al. [28], residents are more likely to endorse tourism development when they clearly perceive an opportunity to improve their quality of life, a principle that is applicable to the context of olive oil tourism.

3. Materials and Methods

To provide additional insights into the main trends of olive oil tourism research, a comprehensive bibliometric exercise was undertaken. A bibliometric exercise involves the quantitative analysis of publications, typically scholarly articles, to gain insights into various aspects, such as research trends, author contributions, countries analyzed, and other pertinent questions. Therefore, this specific exercise involved the collection of relevant articles in a first phase, followed by the analysis and classification of abstracts/papers drawn from all articles published on olive oil tourism in the ISI Web of Science (WoS) bibliographic database, up to 26 June 2023. The WoS is the premier broad-spectrum international bibliographic database [9], and has become the most influential bibliographic data source traditionally employed for literature research [29].

The methodological guidelines provided by Hernandez-Mogollon et al. [7] served as the foundation for the selection of a set of relevant studies that could represent the field of olive oil tourism. Accordingly, a list of keywords was used: 'olive tourist*', 'olive oil touris*', 'oil touris*', 'oleotouris*', and 'olive based agrotourism'. The search encompassed all years up to the date of the search (26 June 2023) and the documents were selected by topic among all those indexed in the WoS. The selection of articles by topic allowed for the collection of documents featuring any of the aforementioned keywords in the title, abstract, author keywords, or Keywords Plus. This procedure yielded a total of 50 documents (articles and/or proceeding papers).

We exported all these articles to an Excel spreadsheet and created a new database with the following relevant fields: authors' names, titles of the articles, year of publication, source, and abstract. Then, in the initial stage of the process, we read the abstract and/or the full document and selected only those that effectively addressed questions related to 'olive oil tourism´. Despite the appearance of one of the aforementioned keywords in all 50 documents, we had to exclude eight articles since they were not related to the topic.

In the second stage, we downloaded the 42 selected documents and read and classified each one of them according to several dimensions: main topic, type of article, empirical methodologies, unit of analysis, and countries under analysis.

Based on the previous section, the articles were classified into 7 topics (see Section 2) plus a residual category titled 'Others': (1) history and roots of the concept, (2) entrepreneurs' demographic traits, (3) entrepreneurs' psychological traits, (4) organizational characteristics, (5) embeddedness, (6) rurality, and (7) resident's perceptions and support. In order to identify the type of article according to the main research method, and building on the contributions of Pato and Teixeira [9], the articles were divided into three categories: (1) conceptual; (2) appreciative/discursive; and (3) empirical. According Pato and Teixeira [9], the articles classified as 'conceptual' primarily focus on theory development without presenting data, the articles classified as 'appreciative/discursive' mainly include appreciations and/or judgments, and those characterized as 'empirical' are exclusively concerned with data analysis.

Once we classified the empirical documents, we adapted the proposals of Malhotra et al. [30] based on the main empirical methodologies used: (1) descriptive and exploratory analyses, (2) multivariate models, (3) qualitative analysis, and (4) surveys. Descriptive and exploratory analyses included numerical and graphic procedures to summarize a collection of data, including distribution, the central tendency or dispersion of variables, ANOVA and correlation tests, and cross-tabulation measures [31]. Multivariate models are more complex and involve the analysis of three or more variables, including factor analysis, cluster analysis, and regression analysis [32]. Qualitative analysis involves a qualitative approach and often includes case studies, ethnographic studies, or narrative studies [33]. Finally, surveys involve a comprehensive review of published and unpublished works using secondary source data [9].

Following the concepts provided by Pato and Teixeira [9], we also classified the empirical articles according to their units of analysis, which could range from micro

to macro: (1) individuals, (2) firms, (3) other organizations/firms, and (4) regions and countries. Additionally, we analyzed the language used in the paper.

In the third stage, we performed a bibliometric analysis based on simple exploratory statistics (cf. next section).

4. Results and Discussion

4.1. The Evolution of Studies on Olive Oil Tourism

The emergence of studies focusing on olive oil tourism in the literature (albeit still relatively limited) began around 2010. As depicted in Figure 1, we could not find any reference to the topic in the WoS database before 2010. In the second decade of the new millennium, the number of papers is residual, not exceeding 5 articles per year. A more substantial increase occurs in the last three years, with the percentage of papers published being comparable to that of the last decade.

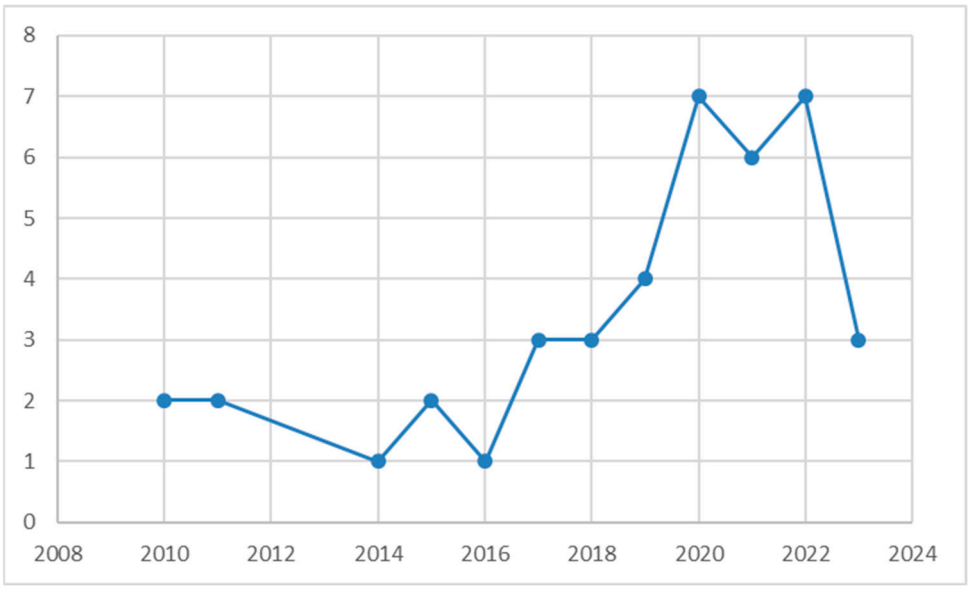

Figure 1. Evolution of olive oil tourism in the WoS. (Source: own elaboration based on data gathered from the WoS).

In summary, the research on olive oil tourism has experienced significant growth over the last five years.

4.2. The Evolution of Studies on Olive Oil Tourism

It is worth noting that 9 out of the top 10 authors in the list of the most prolific authors on olive oil tourism are affiliated with universities in Spain. The only exception is one author affiliated with a school in Croatia. Upon observing all the authors in our database, the scenario is similar, i.e., the vast majority of authors belong to universities in Spain. Only four researchers are affiliated with other universities or institutions, particularly from Hong Kong Polytechnic University, Pennsylvania State University, RMIT University (Australia), and the Technical University of Oruro (Bolivia). It is therefore evident that olive oil tourism is primarily a Spanish phenomenon, most notably in regions such as Cordoba and Andaluzia.

In the top-ranking authors, the contributions of Maria Genoveva Vázquez de la Torre are noteworthy, with 10 papers published on olive oil tourism. This author has a remarkable number of publications indexed in the WOS and a considerable h-index, which reflects her scientific visibility and influence on this subject (see Table 2).

Table 2. Main contributors to olive oil tourism.

Ranking	Name of the Author	Affiliation (Country)	Total N° of Publications in the WOS (h-Index)	N° of Papers
1	Maria Genoveva Millán Vázquez de la Torre	Universidad Loyola Andalucía (Spain)	49 (8)	10
2	Ana Čehić Marić	Institute of Agriculture and Tourism Poreč (Croatia)	11 (3)	5
2	Ana María Campón-Cerro	Universidad de Extremadura (Spain)	20 (11)	5
2	Isabel Carrillo-Hidalgo	Universidad de Jaen (Spain)	30 (7)	5
2	Jairo Casado-Montilla	Universidad de Jaen (Spain)	9 (3)	5
2	José Antonio Folgado-Fernández	Universidad de Extremadura (Spain)	22 (11)	5
2	Jose Manuel Hernandez-Mogollon	Universidad de Extremadura (Spain)	36 (17)	5
2	Juan Ignacio Pulido-Fernández	Universidad de Jaen (Spain)	27 (6)	5
3	Juan Antonio Parrilla González	Universidad de Jaen (Spain)	8(3)	4
3	Salvador Moral Cuadra	University of Granada (Spain)	25 (8)	4

Source: own elaboration based on data gathered from the WoS.

4.3. Main Outlets and Scientific Visibility

The outlets with the highest number of papers published on rural olive oil tourism include *Sustainability* (with 7 papers published by authors [1,4,13,16,24,28,34]), *Tourism and Hospitality Management* (with 4 papers), and the *International Journal of Gastronomy and Food Science* (with 3 papers). It is noteworthy that none of these journals specifically focus on rural studies or rural tourism-related topics. This is understandable, since olive oil tourism is an emerging area of study that intersects other diverse areas, including the environmental, cultural, economic, and social sustainability of human beings and gastronomy. The first journal (*Sustainability*) and the latter (*Gastronomy and Food Science*) are both journals with a considerable high impact factor (IF), evaluated through Clarivate (3.9 and 3.194, respectively). The *Tourism Management Perspectives Journal*, the *Journal of Vacation Marketing*, and the *International Journal of Tourism Research* are leading journals with more visibility in terms of their impact factors, with 8.7, 5.1, and 4.6 IFs, respectively.

Table 3 further illustrates that the majority of journals published on olive oil tourism possess IFs.

Table 3. Main outlets in olive oil tourism.

Rank in Terms of IF	Source Title	IF 2022	Frequency
1	*Tourism Management Perspectives*	8.7	1
2	*Journal of Vacation Marketing*	5.1	2
3	*International Journal of Tourism Research*	4.6	1
4	*Tourism Recreation Research*	4.2	1
5	*Heliyon*	4	2
6	*Sustainability*	3.9	7

Table 3. *Cont.*

Rank in Terms of IF	Source Title	IF 2022	Frequency
7	*International Journal of Gastronomy and Food Science*	3.8	3
8	*International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*	3.39	1
9	*British Food Journal*	3.3	1
10	*International Journal of Gastronomy and Food Science*	3.194	2
11	*Journal of Tourism and Cultural Change*	2.2	1
12	*Tourism and Hospitality Management*	1.3	4
13	*REVESCO. Revista de Estudios Cooperativos*	1.1	1
14	*Cuadernos de Turismo*	0.8	1
14	*Acta Turistica*	0.8	1
15	*Finisterra*	0.7	1
16	*Eskisehir Osmangazi Universitesi Iibf Dergisi-Eskisehir Osmangazi University Journal of Economics and Administrative Sciences*	0.5	1
16	*Cuadernos de Desarrollo Rural*	0.5	1
17	*Zbornik Veleucilista U Rijeci-Journal of the Polytechnics of Rijeka*	0.4	1
17	*Revista de Ciencias Sociales*	0.4	1
18	*Revista de Estudios Regionales*	0.1	1
	Investigaciones Turísticas		
	Estudios de Traducción		
	Revista de Geografía Norte Grande		
	Onomázein		
	En Cuad. Desarro. Rural		
	Plos One		
	Tourism in Southern and Eastern Europe		
	Ge-conservación		

Source: own elaboration based on data gathered from the WoS.

4.4. Main Topics

Regarding the dominant research topics in olive oil tourism literature, our bibliometric exercise allowed us to identify potential literature gaps or less-explored topics in the research. When analyzing the distribution of olive oil tourism research by main topic over time (cf. Figure 2), it can be observed that the demand perspective, particularly tourists' psychological traits, is the dominant topic of research, comprising almost half of the research studies conducted on this subject. Given that the perception of the expectations and needs of tourists represent a valuable resource for stakeholders, policy makers, and destination managers in adapting their product [10,15], this finding is understandably of great relevance. Both international and domestic tourists seem to engage in olive oil tourism. However, as stated in the studies by Aguera et al. [25] and Torre and Pérez [35], it is interesting to note that the majority of them are domestic. Therefore, we agree with D´Auria et al. [34], who claim that olive oil tourism is a type of domestic tourism. In this sense, it can also contribute to the overall development of local economies, fostering a sense of pride and connection to one's own culture and traditions.

However, it is surprising that only ten papers focused on the offer perspective: five on aspects related to the organizational characteristics, three on aspects related to rurality, and two on aspects related to residents' perceptions. In addition to this scarcity of the research, it should be noted that no studies existed with regard to issues related to institutional frameworks, governance, or policy measures. Actually, in this regard, no studies were found concerning the division of labour issues and the political economy of olive oil tourism. This apparent omission deserves our attention, since the labor exploitation of agricultural migrant workers has been a concern in various European countries, particularly

in Italy. Migrant workers who may come from economically disadvantaged regions (sich as African ones) often face challenging working conditions, low wages, inadequate housing, and limited access to social services. Moreover, exploitative practices can include long working hours, a lack of job security, and sometimes even human rights abuse. For instance, Francesca and Berti [36] highlighted that many of the Italian agricultural products (e.g., olive growing and viticulture) were the result of different levels of illegal recruitment and labor exploitation. The BBC even called Sicily's rich olive pickings the fruit of Italy's migrant exploitation [37]. In this sense, we can consider that immigration issues are perhaps one of the barriers to developing this form of tourism in countries beyond (the over-emphasis on) Spain. At the same time, it reveals either the novelty of the touristic product and/or the lack of integration with other local economic activities.

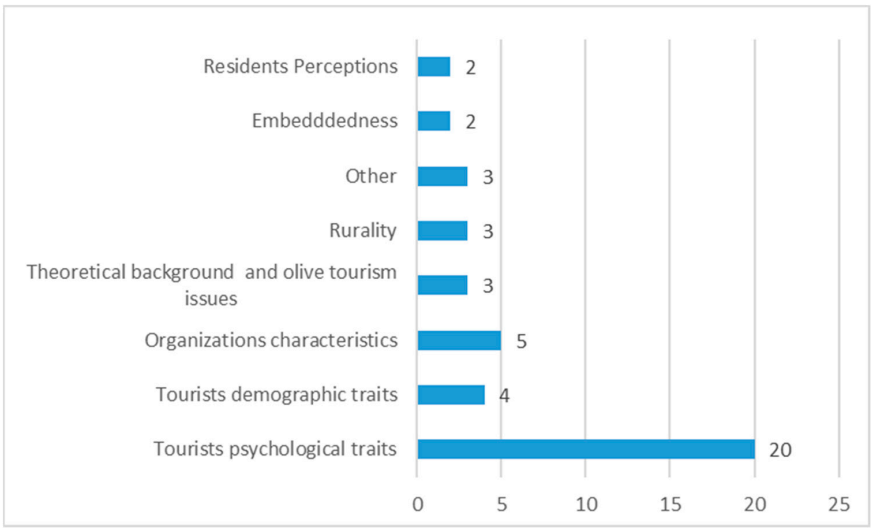

Figure 2. Main topics in olive oil tourism. (Source: own elaboration based on data gathered from the WoS).

4.5. Methodologies Used

Concerning the methodologies used, 38 out of the 42 articles presented empirical methods. Surprisingly, the research shows that multivariate models are favoured over the period of analysis, accounting for 55% of the total articles published (see Figure 3). Given that olive oil tourism intersects with other types of tourism in rural areas, and considering the availability of mathematical methods and statistical software, these are the models that have garnered the most attention from researchers.

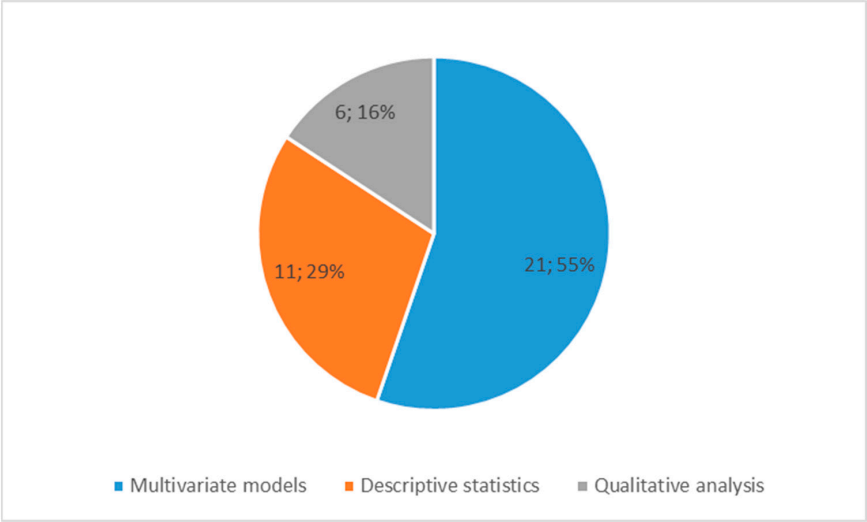

Figure 3. Empirical methodologies used. (Source: own elaboration based on data gathered from the WoS).

However, given the power of the qualitative research in social sciences, particularly tourism-related research, it would be appropriate for more researchers to use this method of research.

4.6. Mains Countries under Analysis

In terms of the countries under analysis, the vast majority of the research focuses on Spain (see Figure 4), the world's largest producer of olive oil [14]. As mentioned earlier, the findings empasize that olive oil tourism is primarily a Spanish concept, with the large majority of studies focusing on regions in Spain, such us Cordoba and Andaluzia.

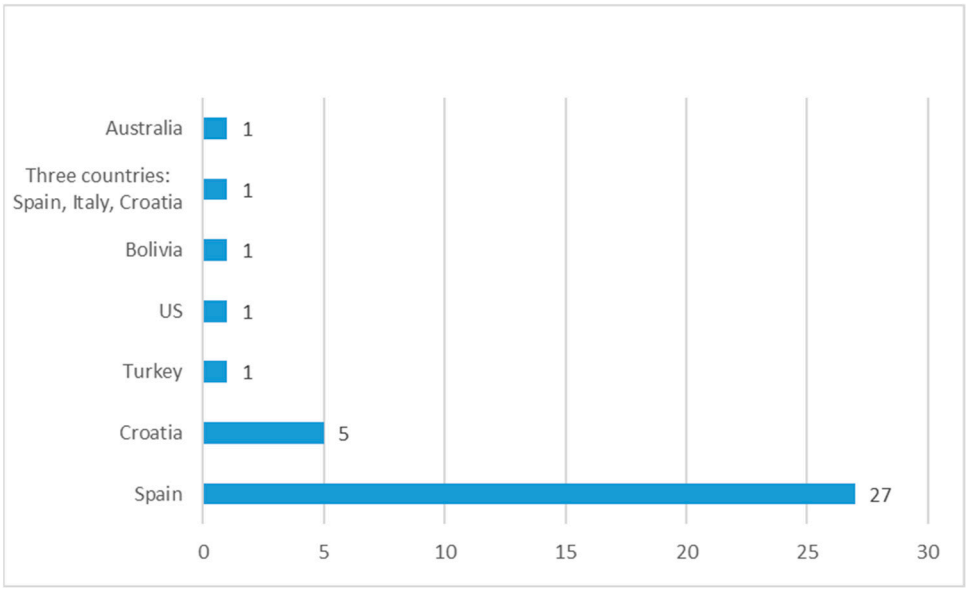

Figure 4. Countries under analysis. (Source: own elaboration based on data gathered from the WoS).

It is indeed surprising that other mediterranic countries, such as Italy, Greece, or Portugal, with a rich tradition of olive oil production, are not included in the list of countries under research. This clearly creates an opportunity for further research on this matter in these specific countries.

5. Conclusions

Olive oil tourism can serve as a platform to promote sustainability by connecting consumers with the agricultural and cultural aspects of olive oil production, encouraging sustainable practices, and contributing to the overall well-being of local communities and ecosystems.

Drawing on a bibliometric exercise of olive oil tourism, the present paper makes three main contributions to the literature on olive oil tourism. Firstly, it provides an objective overview of the primary contributors and outlets, as well as their scientific visibility, as reflected by the fact that the majority of the referred journals possess an IF.

Secondly, it presents the disciplinary topics researched in the literature on olive oil tourism. This analysis uncovers research gaps that should be considered in future studies. Particularly, there is a need to invest in research that focuses on the offer approach, addressing aspects related to the product itself, waste reduction/circular economy, organizations' characteristics and/or institutional frameworks, and governance that supports olive oil tourism. The creation of conducive conditions by local, regional, or even national authorities that support olive oil tourism and the related products, along with the engagement of all stakeholders (tour operators, local communities, farmers, restaurants, lodgings, packers and olive oil-processing enterprises, schools, and political and administrative centers in the region/locality) becomes imperative.

Additionally, considering that climate change emerges as the main threat to the viability of olive production [38], there is a need for more in-depth studies on the environmental impacts of climate change and draughts on olive oil production, and how this can affect olive oil tourism.

Thirdly, this study reveals that olive oil tourism is primarily a Spanish phenomenon, whereas other countries with apparently similar potentialities, such as Portugal or Italy, do not appear to invest in this emerging form of rural tourism. Therefore, further empirical research including other countries in the European and Mediterranean sphere, or even in the American sphere, would enrich the framework of studies in this promising field.

These findings can be explained by the fact that olive oil tourism is still in an initial phase of development and requires a greater involvement from diverse stakeholders [15]. Indeed, on the one hand, the dramatic economic downturn in many rural areas of Europe and beyond [9] has made the promotion of olive oil tourism one of the most promising approaches to enhance the sustainability of these rural areas. However, it should be noted that olive oil tourism is a type of tourism linked to the rural environment, agriculture, the cultivation of olive trees, gastronomy, and the traditions of rural regions. For that reason, it is crucial to understand that this form of tourism is intimately connected to the wider tourism system and other tourism products in the rural space. Its effects will be even more significant if it manages to engage spatial resources to provide the most lucrative offer possible.

One the other hand, since the Mediterranean diet has been declared the Intangible Heritage of Humanity [14], and olive oil is one of its pillars, olive oil tourism, as a form of gastronomic and cultural tourism, has found an additional argument to support its development in rural areas. While the bibliometric exercise performed provided a rich and valuable overview of the literature on olive oil tourism, it has some limitations. Firstly, a bibliometric exercise mainly involves the quantitative analysis of pertinent questions (e.g., research trends, author contributions, and countries analyzed). The absence of more qualitative information limits a more in-depth understanding of the intellectual contributions of a work. Second the bibliometric exercise performed had a modest scope, since it focused on peer-reviewed journal articles and excluded other types of scholarly outputs, such as books, reports, or theses. This narrow focus does not provide a comprehensive view of the entire body of scholarly work. Third, it focused merely on articles indexed in the WoS database, therefore excluding scientific works published in other type of databases, notably in Scopus or Google Scholar. Therefore, while the WoS is a reputable database source, in terms of theoretical research, it would be useful to broaden the literature survey by utilizing Google Scholar or Scopus.

In terms of the practical implications, as mentioned earlier, there is a need for more studies on the offer approach, particularly focusing on the olive oil tourist product and the intuitional support provided to stakeholders operating in this field of activity [12]. Be aware that immigration issues are perhaps one of the barriers to developing this form of tourism in countries such as Italy, and because no studies were found concerning the age, gender, and ethnicities of workers in olive oil tourism production, more attention should be given to this matter. It is important for governments, employers, and civil society to collaborate to address the root causes of labor exploitation and implement effective measures to protect the rights and well-being of migrant workers in the olive oil production industry.

Additionally, this study draws attention to the need for organizing seminars with stakeholders in the field and the scientific community to expand the knowledge of the activities linked to this kind of tourism, and to create a European network of cooperation among similar areas and programs [12] in regions with the potential to promote olive oil tourism. One good example of this is the Route of the Olive Tree, in Greece, which acts as a first attempt to join some of the Euro-Mediterranean olive-growing countries, sharing common issues and problems concerning the rural tourism developments in their areas [39].

Given the current dramatic situation stemming from the impacts of climatic change, there is a real concern for environmental sustainability that warrants exploration in the future research.

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