

# **SOCIOECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT IN RURAL AREAS THROUGH THE CREATION OF TOURIST ROUTES: An olive tourism approach in the Jaén province (Spain)**

**Tomás López-Guzmán**

University of Cordoba, Spain

**Virgilio González-Fernández**

University of Granada, Spain

**ABSTRACT** Spain is a country which has a long tradition of olive oil production and a highly consolidated tourism industry. Olive oil routes are being structured in the country with the aim of developing rural areas which may, on occasions, be some distance from traditional tourist destinations. In this paper, an analysis of olive tourism is presented with the objective of showing how olive oil (and gastronomy) can be, and at times already is, the main factor which attracts a tourist to a given area. The results presented in this paper are the product of an analysis carried out in the Jaén province in Spain, the area with the highest production levels of olive oil in the world. **Keywords:** rural development, tourist routes, olive tourism, olive oil, Jaén.

**RESUMEN:** España, un país con una enorme tradición oleícola y con una consolidada industria turística, está vertebrando diferentes rutas turísticas del aceite de oliva con el objetivo de desarrollar áreas rurales, en ocasiones alejadas de los tradicionales destinos turísticos. En este artículo presentamos un análisis del oleoturismo con el objetivo de mostrar cómo el aceite de oliva (y la gastronomía) puede ser, y a veces lo es, el principal atractivo para visitar una determinada área geográfica. Y para ello presentamos los resultados de un análisis en una zona geográfica determinada, la provincia de Jaén (España). **Palabras Clave:** desarrollo rural, rutas turísticas, oleoturismo, aceite de oliva, Jaén.

**RESUMO:** Espanha é um país com uma enorme tradição oleícola e com uma indústria turística consolidada, estando agora a estruturar várias rotas turísticas do azeite, com o objetivo de desenvolver as zonas rurais mais distantes dos destinos turísticos tradicionais. Este artigo apresenta uma análise do oleoturismo, com o objetivo de mostrar como é que o azeite (e a gastronomia) pode ser, e às vezes já é, o principal atractivo para se visitar uma determinada área geográfica. São apresentados os resultados de uma análise a uma zona geográfica específica: a província espanhola de Jaén. **Palavras Chave:** desenvolvimento rural, rotas turísticas, oleoturismo, azeite, Jaén.

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**Tomás López-Guzmán** is a Lecturer in the Department of Applied Economics at the University of Córdoba (Spain). He holds a PhD in Economics. He is the author of more than 60 papers. His current research is focussed on the analysis of tourist routes, the impact of tourism on the environment and community-based tourism. **Virgilio González-Fernández** is a Lecturer in the Department of Political and Administrative Sciences at the University of Granada (Spain). He holds a doctorate in Political, Economic and Business Science. He is the author of five books and has published more than 20 papers. His main lines of research are immigration policy and tourism policies.

## INTRODUCTION

Nowadays, tourism is undergoing large changes, motivated by the need to adapt to increasingly demanding and active tourists. Therefore, among other changes, tourists now travel throughout the year and for shorter periods of time, they are better informed about their chosen destination (thanks to the internet) and they are seeking new kinds of tourism resources. As a result of these changes, thematic tourism has emerged. The most important elements within this kind of tourism are the recovery of the social and cultural heritage of the areas involved, contact with nature and knowledge about the local community's customs (Pulina *et al.*, 2006; Nogues, 2007). Therefore, over the last few years, a commitment has been made to showcasing everything related to cuisine, presenting it as a reflection of the area's identity. In this sense, cuisine and tourism (linked with the local culture) create a perfect partnership, allowing tourists to experience a distinct product and discover a different destination, and thus bringing about economic development in certain rural (and, also, sometimes urban) areas based upon the concept of sustainable development. In turn, in order to promote tourism development based on local resources, in rural areas multidimensional interdependence is created with the aim of forming a competitive destination (Saxena & Ilbery, 2010).

Following on from Stewart *et al.* (2008), the increasing importance of cuisine suggests and promotes the idea that awareness of agricultural products can be, and often is, the main reason for visiting a specific area and not necessarily a secondary (or complementary) motivation for making a trip. Furthermore, food is a reflection of the social, cultural and environmental history of towns or, in other words, the idiosyncrasies of their inhabitants (Brunori & Rossi, 2000). This is also in line with the fact that rural areas are playing an increasingly important role as a place of leisure and as a space for carrying out different kinds of activities which allow for contact with nature (Alonso & Northcote, 2010).

The aim of this study is to analyse the existence of tourist routes linked to cuisine - and in particular to olive oil - as a reflection of Mediterranean cultural heritage and as a means of achieving greater socioeconomic development in rural areas. Following this introduction, this paper has been divided into four further sections. In section two the scientific literature in this field is summarised and in section three the social and economic importance of olive oil is analysed. In section four the concept of olive tourism is discussed and, finally, in section five the study into olive tourism in the province of Jaén is presented.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

According to Briedenhann and Wickens (2003), a tourist route can be defined as the creation of a cluster of activities and attractions which

encourage cooperation between different areas and serve as a driving force in stimulating economic development through tourism. This therefore implies that these routes should demonstrate a series of qualities which support them as a tourist destination. In fact, routes have been documented which are based upon vastly different themes, such as the Vikings (Halewood & Hannan, 2001), ghosts (Inglis & Colmes, 2001) or places cited in various works of literature (Herbert, 2001).

The main element in the design of a tourist route is, firstly, the definition and construction of the route itself. Next comes the marketing stage, for which it is necessary to offer an attractive product for the tourist. Following on from Herbert (2001) there are three main stages in the design of a tourist route. The first stage is determining the resources necessary for the development of tourism in the area, or in other words, the values and priorities of the creation of the route to begin with, and any possible enlargements and modifications. The second stage comes once the product is already on the market, and involves analysing – through various studies – if tourists have favourably taken to the product and, if not possible guidelines for the route's improvement or modification are implemented. The third stage involves management team for the route gradually interpreting data related to tourists visiting the route, with the aim of adapting the product to the needs of the tourist. It is important to highlight that this last stage should be developed simultaneously with the first two stages, or, in other words, throughout the product development process, so as to adapt the product to tourists' needs as and when necessary.

Later, once the tourist route has been designed, it must be marketed. The marketing is subject to a series of variables which encourage the appropriate promotion of the route. One of the essential variables for the appropriate marketing of the route is that it must be situated on a road network which allows tourists to reach the route via a proposed itinerary. Similarly, the tourist route must be based on a specific activity which sets it apart from and distinguishes it from other similar or nearby routes. The theme of the route on which the itinerary is based can be very varied, for example, it could be based around literary corners, film locations, olive oil mills or wineries. Furthermore, the route must have a common cohesive link, something which is key in attracting tourists to the experience the itinerary will provide. Therefore, tourism planning, design and development must be fundamentally based on how tourists perceive the attractions, the natural environment and the services provided.

Within tourist routes linked to cuisine, there are several which are related to wine and, more generally, with grape growing and wine production. Therefore, it is interesting to make a superficial reference to the coordination of wine tourism routes as a point of reference for the

shaping of olive tourism. Thus, wine tourism, according to Getz and Brown (2006), can be defined simultaneously as an example of consumer behaviour, a strategy for local development and development of the area's wine market, and a marketing opportunity for wineries, providing them with a means of selling their products directly to the consumer. Hall et al. (2000) consider wine tourism to be the experience of visiting vineyards, visiting wineries, and attending festivals or wine demonstrations where wine tasting and related experiences are the main motivation for the tourist.

Research was first carried out in the field of wine tourism in the mid 1990s, with studies mainly located in Australia and New Zealand. These first pieces of research mainly focussed on two aspects: the analysis of the socioeconomic impact of wine tourism in rural areas and the behaviour of tourists visiting wineries (Getz, 2000). There are two studies which mark the beginning of research into this field: *Wine Tourism around the World* (Hall et al., 2000) and *Explore Wine Tourism* (Getz, 2000). Within wine tourism, there is an important line of research into the so-called wine tourism product, and within this there is the analysis of tourist wine routes (Mitchell & Hall, 2006). In this sense, the creation of a wine route consists in defining one or various itineraries in the area and signposting them correctly, with various wineries and other places related to wine indicated, as well as providing information about additional places of interest or historical sites (Hall et al., 2000). Finally, it is important to remember that these routes must serve the purpose of developing the area economically and socially, generally within a rural context (Bruwer, 2003). The aim is that the tourist has an experience based upon knowledge, the appreciation of wine and wine tasting. Combined, all this will serve as a means of increasing the value of tourism in the area.

## OLIVE OIL AS AN ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL RESOURCE

Olive oil is a variety of vegetable oil, used in cooking, which is extracted from the fruit recently harvested from olive trees. Olives are harvested at the end of autumn or beginning of winter when the level of fatty acids in the fruit is at its highest. After harvesting, olives are ground into a paste, from which the oil itself is then extracted. Within olive oil, there are three main grades: high quality extra-virgin, industrial extra- virgin and industrial staple oil. According to Brunori et al. (2002) with high quality extra-virgin olive oil the key is in the production process, since only the best fruit are selected and then the juice of the olive is extracted very soon after. This product, which is relatively expensive, is generally sold to international markets, although it is also consumed by inhabitants of the area where it is produced as well.

Olive oil is a basic staple of the diet of people living in the Mediterranean. In these countries they follow the so-called Mediterranean diet, a diet which was recognised as Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity by UNESCO in November 2010. The responsibility for conserving and transmitting this kind of diet was attributed to four countries – Spain, Italy, Greece and Morocco.

It is important to note that, in comparison with other vegetable oils, olive oil is not produced in vast quantities. This kind of oil is mainly produced in Europe, with the most important producers and sellers being Spain, Italy and Greece. Table 1 presents data relating to worldwide production of olive oil for harvests from 2005/2006 to 2009/2010.

**Table 1. World olive oil production, 2005-2010.**  
**Amounts in thousands of tonnes.**

Country	2005/06	2006/07	2007/08	2008/09	2009/10
Spain	826.9	1111.4	1236.1	1028.0	1200.0
Italy	636.5	490.0	510.0	540.0	540.0
Greece	424.0	370.0	327.2	305.0	348.0
Tunisia	220.0	160.0	170.0	150.0	140.0
Turkey	112.0	165.0	72.0	130.0	147.0
Syria	100.0	154.0	100.0	130.0	150.0
Morocco	75.0	75.0	85.0	85.0	95.0
Portugal	29.1	47.5	36.3	49.0	50.0
Other	149.0	194.1	176.4	248.5	211.5
Total	2572.5	2767.0	2713.0	2665.5	2881.5

*Source: International Olive Council (2010)*

*Note: Data relating to the 2009/2010 harvest are forecasts.*

In accordance with the information shown in Table 1, it can be deduced that Spain is responsible for around 40% of the total annual world olive oil production. Combining Spain and a further two countries (Italy and Greece), this number increases to 70% of total world production. Spain produces more than a million tonnes of olive oil



## OLIVE TOURISM

In Europe, cuisine has been developed as a tourism resource on the basis of tourist routes, which are characterised by the existence of both natural attractions (such as mountains and rural landscapes, and occasionally urban landscapes as well) and physical attractions (such as wineries, olive mills, oil museums etc.). The tourist olive oil route experience involves a visit to the olive mill, the viewing of an olive grove, a visit to an oil museum, sampling the local area's cuisine, a visit to an olive oil information centre, the contemplation of scenery, the purchase of oil and of furniture made from wood from olive trees, and, finally, staying in accommodation located in places related to this topic. This has been done in a similar way to other culinary tourist routes (Raven-scroft & Van Westering, 2001). In turn, the greater the supply of tourism resources in the area (olive mills, museums, natural parks, adventure tourism activities), the greater the amount of time the tourist will spend in the area, and hence, the number of nights spent in accommodation will increase. In fact, one of the biggest criticisms deduced from studies into culinary tourist routes (López-Guzmán et al., 2009) is the lack of complementary activities available in rural areas where tourists stay, which therefore means that the number of tourists staying overnight is normally very low.

Tourist routes, and especially olive routes, are the result of the effort and the collaboration of many public and private businesses. Scientific literature in this field has studied the various types of development strategies used by these alliances (Telfer, 2001). For these alliances to function and for the route to be managed appropriately, an organisation, made up of public and private businesses, must be created. Through their desire for cooperation, the aim of these alliances is to boost and manage this tourism product, as well as to make it more dynamic.

The construction of an olive oil route provides an opportunity to create synergies between different kinds of tourism such as, for example, rural tourism (supporting accommodation in particular), culinary tourism (through the sampling of dishes typical of the local area) and cultural tourism (through the appreciation of various man-made attractions and/or natural landscapes). Therefore, olive tourist's experience should include the following two elements: firstly, a visit to an olive oil mill, a key element in olive oil tourist routes and a very important element for the tourist; and secondly, the sampling of olive oil and its combination with other products typical of the area (Brunori & Rossi, 2000).

Olive tourism in the corresponding area should be promoted in coordination with the advertising carried out by the various olive mills, restaurants, hotels etc. In other words, there should be promotion

of both the area as a whole and individual advertising on the part of each business in operation in the area. Similarly, there is a need for more research to be carried out – fieldwork-based research in particular – as a means of determining the kind of tourist who comes to the area, tourist numbers (and tourist segments), the coordination of new products, the existing supply and the identification of certain market niches. Furthermore, it is also necessary to increase the supply of tourism in the area, both through the creation (or improvement) of businesses which respond to the demands of tourists visiting the area and through the structuring of various forms of infrastructure which improve, for example, access to the area and facilitate an improvement in the wellbeing of the local community.

An olive mill's objective for creating a tourist route is totally different depending on the size of the mill. On the one hand, for large producers of olive oil (and for the Denomination of Origin which ensures the quality of the oils produced in the area), the main aim of an olive oil route is to improve and position their brand image among different consumers, above all amongst foreigners. On the other hand, for small mills, which often experience great difficulties in marketing their products since they do not have adequate distribution channels, the objective is to sell oil in the mill itself.

Currently, studies focussed exclusively on olive tourism are practically non-existent. In fact, the majority of research which deals with olive tourism only does so superficially as an aspect related to rural tourism and, more specifically, to farm tourism (Busby & Rendle, 2000). The main studies into olive tourism include the work carried out by Alonso and Northcote (2010), which puts forward interesting research focussed on the analysis of the supply of this kind of tourism in a specific region of Australia. One of the main conclusions drawn from this study is that this kind of tourism could involve an interesting means of marketing and that farmers could receive an additional income, as is the case with other kinds of tourism, such as wine tourism. It is also important to highlight the study carried out by Ruiz-Guerra (2010) which presents a quantitative and qualitative analysis into olive oil and deals with the study of olive tourism from different points of view, such as from a cultural, social, economic and sustainability perspective.

## OLIVE TOURISM IN JAÉN

By region, Andalucía is the main producer of olive oil in Spain and is responsible for around 70-75% of total production in the country. By province, Jaén is the largest producer, producing 250,000 tonnes of olive oil annually, a figure which represents 50% of the total amount produced in Andalucía, 25-30% of the total production in Spain and 9% of total worldwide production. In figure 2, the location of the Jaén province within Spain is shown.





Figure 2. The Jaén Province

With regards to tourism in Jaén, the main data relating to the number of visitors are gathered in Table 2.

Table 2. Tourists in the Jaén province 2005-2009

Year	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009
Spanish	558,180	634,225	642,784	563,878	545,674
Foreign	75,450	82,386	86,889	73,914	68,474
Total	633,630	716,611	729,673	637,792	614,148

Source: Created for this study using data from the National Institute of Statistics (Instituto Nacional de Estadística) (2010).

In accordance with the information shown in Table 2, it can be seen that tourists visiting Jaén are mainly Spanish. This suggests that a boost in the coordination of tourist routes based around olive oil could lead to an increase in foreign tourism in this area. This could, in turn, increase sales of olive oil in tourists’ countries of origin.

The Jaén province is currently home to four Denominations of Origin, which serve to reinforce the quality of olive oil production in the area. The four Denominations are *Sierra Mágina*, *Sierra de Cazorla*, *Sierra de Segura* and *Campiñas de Jaén*. These Denominations of Origin are

those which are supporting the creation of olive oil routes, due to the high quality of these products.

There are 32 olive mills under the *Sierra Mágina* Denomination. These mills produce extra-virgin olive oil and are open to visits from tourists. In fact, the various olive mills and the Denomination of Origin have put together various initiatives so that tourists can find out about the journey from the olive fruit to the production of the oil. In addition, they also organise tastings and combine oil with other foods. Furthermore, this Denomination of Origin carries out research projects into olive groves and olive oil. Moreover, in addition to the tasting of olive oil, the tourist is also able to enjoy beautiful landscapes within a prestigious and recognised Natural Park.

In 2009, the *Sierra de Cazorla* Denomination of Origin certified 4500 tonnes of extra-virgin olive oil, which represents 18% of certified oils for all of Spain's Denominations of Origin combined. This denomination is found beside the *Cazorla, Segura y Las Villas* Natural Park, one of the leaders in rural tourism in Spain. The main data with regards to visitors to the Natural Park are shown in Table 3.

**Table 3. Visitors to the *Sierra de Cazorla, Segura y Las Villas* Natural Park 2005-2009**

Year	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009
Spanish	43,184	41,536	43,403	39,196	40,731
Foreign	7,632	6,574	6,270	6,462	5,844
Total	50,816	48,110	49,673	45,658	46,575

*Source: Created for this study using data from the National Institute of Statistics (2010).*

The *Sierra de Segura* Denomination of Origin has 18 olive mills where around 24,000 tonnes of olive oil are produced. With respect to tourism, this area typically welcomes tourists who want to learn about the heritage of the area while at the same time enjoying its cuisine. This area's cuisine is, logically, based upon the use of olive oil, with oil produced under strict organic criteria being their standout product. In this area, various forms of promotion are employed in order to bring together the heritage of the area with its cuisine.

The *Campaña de Jaén* Denomination of Origin has 59 olive mills. This is the most advanced Denomination of Origin in terms of olive tourism. It has an olive oil cultural centre made up of two restaurants, a hotel, and a museum of olive culture where there are varieties of ol-

ives indigenous to the entire Mediterranean basin. Furthermore, it also has a themed lecture room where the various components of olive oil are studied. This has been a reference point for the analysis of food making up the Mediterranean diet. Within this area there are two cities which were declared World Heritage Sites in 2003, Úbeda and Baeza. In Table 4, the number of visitors to Úbeda between 2006 and 2009 are shown.

**Table 4. Visitors to the city of Úbeda (2006-2009).**

Year	2006	2007	2008	2009
Spanish	57,039	68,512	53,246	51,970
Foreign	11,301	11,331	11,946	11,970
Total	68,340	79,843	65,193	63,939

*Source: Created for this study using data from the National Institute of Statistics (2010).*

Within the tourist routes located in the Jaén province, olive tourism allows for olive oil tastings to take place and various kinds of courses on olive culture to be followed. Moreover, there are different kinds of olive mills where tourists are shown how the olive fruit is transformed into olive oil. This goes hand-in-hand with themed restaurants where the food is based primarily on the use of olive oil. Finally, there is rural accommodation, which is often in the form of former olive mills or country estates which have been refurbished for use as accommodation within rural tourism.

For this study, two of the tourist routes currently in existence in the Jaén province are presented. The first begins in the Baeza Olive Culture Museum (*Museo de la Cultura del Olivo de Baeza*) where visitors are shown different models of olive mills and learn about the fundamental processes involved in the production of olive oil – grinding, pressing and decanting and storage. Moreover, the visitor also learns about the characteristics and properties of olive oil and is shown the different aspects which effect its quality, grading, colour and vitamin content. The route then passes through the city of Martos where there is a traditional olive farm called ‘*los olivos centenarios*’ or ‘the hundred-year old olive trees’. More than 60% of the trees here are more than 200 years old, and despite this the farm remains fully functional. This route continues by visiting some of the most prestigious olive mills in the area where the oil produced has won various international awards. The route comes to an end in some of the numerous themed restaurants which

are in the area, where the tourist can enjoy the area's cuisine, once again based primarily on the use of olive oil.

The second route goes around the *Sierra de Cazorla, Segura y Las Villas* Natural Park and begins in a classic Andalusian-style country estate, especially appropriate for olive tourism. Here tourists are shown the different varieties of olive grown in the area and the olive oil production process is dealt with in greater depth. Tourists visit the olive groves in the area and see the work that the olive mill carries out. The aim is that the tourist is the protagonist in the whole process, hence during their visit they are able to gather olives (approximately five kilos), from which the oil is later manually extracted and bottled, giving the tourist approximately half a litre of extra-virgin olive oil which they can then take home with them. This is accompanied by an olive tasting so that the visitor can learn about the different varieties of olives and how to identify the characteristics of each kind of olive. This route is further complemented by a visit to one of the most recognised Natural Parks in Spain, the *Sierra de Cazorla, Segura y Las Villas* Natural Park, as well as a visit to the two Cultural Heritage Sites in the area, the cities of Úbeda and Baeza.

## CONCLUSIONS

During the first few years of the 21<sup>st</sup> century a significant change has been taking place within tourism, which is a result of, among other things, the evolution of the demand. Tourists are now looking for both traditional sun and beach destinations and other kinds of destinations and products. Therefore, new products are being created in an attempt to meet the needs of increasingly active tourists who are looking for new experiences. Within these new products the most important elements are local customs and the cuisine of a given place.

This paper has focussed on a new area of research which is emerging around the creation of tourist routes based on food products, or more specifically olive oil, a food primarily produced in Mediterranean countries.

The main conclusions which can be drawn from this paper are that the development of tourist routes is particularly important in rural areas. In rural areas tourism can be a complementary economic activity to agriculture and, at the same time, can serve as means of promoting agricultural products. Furthermore, it is possible to coordinate different culinary tourist routes based on the significant scientific research into wine tourism. Thus, wine routes can be a good starting point for the in-depth study of olive oil tourist routes.

Nevertheless, more scientific studies must be carried out in this field in order to respond to various questions, in particular those related to the coordination of routes and to the demand. This will lead

to a better understanding of who the tourists who follow these routes are, where they come from, their motivation, their preferences and their average spend. Finally, it would be interesting to create a tourism product which incorporates olive oil and cuisine with natural and social elements. In short, a product which is part of the culture of towns.

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