Olive oil tourism in southern Europe: Proposals for tourism development of olive grove rural areas

ANA MARÍA CAMPÓN-CERRO * [amcampon@unex.es]
ELIDE DI-CLEMENTE ** [ediclemente@unex.es]
JOSÉ MANUEL HERNÁNDEZ-MOGOLLÓN *** [jmherdez@unex.es]
PAOLA DE SALVO **** [paola.desalvo@unipg.it]
VIVIANA CALZATI ***** [viviana.calzati@unipv.it]

Abstract | For many European destinations the binomial ‘typical product-tourism’ is becoming a trigger tool for rural development. This work focuses on highlighting the tourist potential of the olive oil. This product boasts a strong cultural identity that can be exploited for tourism diversification of the olive grove rural areas. The objective of this work is to put forward a proposal for the development of these areas from an integral, sustainable and participative perspective. A tourism management model that can be applied to the olive groves areas of southern Europe is proposed. The foreseeable results would allow the improvement of local economy, agricultural sector and tourism, as well as other indirect benefits associated with the enhancement of the quality of life of the local community.

Keywords | Olive oil tourism, Olive grove areas, Tourism economics, Tourism marketing, Rural development.

Resumo | Para muitos destinos europeus, o binómio ‘produto típico-turismo’ está a tornar-se um fator estruturante do desenvolvimento rural. O presente trabalho centra-se em salientar as potencialidades turísticas ligadas ao azeite. Este produto conta com uma forte identidade cultural que pode ser explorada para a diversificação do turismo nas zonas rurais olivícolas. O objetivo deste estudo é a proposta de desenvolvimento destas zonas sob uma abordagem turística integral.
The use of the gastronomic heritage for tourist purposes is taking a leading role in the socioeconomic development of rural environments (Marsden, Banks & Bristow, 2000). For many European destinations the binomial 'typical product-tourism' is becoming a structuring factor of rural development (De Salvo, Hernández-Mogollón, Di-Clemente & Calzati, 2013). This paper focuses on the potential offered by high quality olive oil for rural areas of south European countries.

In countries such as Spain or Italy, olive oil has been part of agri-food tradition for centuries. It has given birth to a complex culture which affects landscapes, architecture and idiosyncrasies of the inhabitants of the olive grove areas (Loumou & Giourga, 2003). Around the olive groves, along the centuries, it has been developed a network of infrastructures that is attractive for tourism, such as mills, often located in places close to water resources and creeks, so that ethnographic heritage joins impressive landscape.

Olive oil has the capability of becoming an important element for the diversification of tourism in the rural olive grove areas. In addition, there exists an emerging tourist demand that values local gastronomy as one of the main motivators of the trips and that appreciate the new olive oil heritage (Millán, Morales & Agudo, 2010).

The aim of this work is to put forward a proposal to identify the potential of the olive oil for encouraging new tourism initiatives and their implementation and management under a comprehensive, sustainable and participative approach. That will offer to these areas a tool for identifying new opportunities of implementing tourism activities around the olive oil and of enhancing local economy. Those activities should be sustained by various agents who work together in order to strengthen a product with a deep cultural identity such as olive oil.

The interest on the study of olive oil tourism is supported by a long list of antecedents coming from both the scientific and the economic field (Loumou & Giourga, 2003; Aybar, 2004; Millán & Agudo, 2010; Millán et al., 2010; Millán, Agudo & Morales, 2011; Molina, Quesada & Ruiz, 2011; Ruiz, Martín & Molina, 2012). From a scientific perspective, this work is justified by the need to contribute to the knowledge of this new market opportunity. Current studies and researches are still incipient and lack of a strong methodological approach. By the other side, from an economic point of view, olive oil adds value to image, local products supply, activities and market position at a national and international level.

One of the main problems faced by rural areas is their potential for achieving a competitive position into the tourism market. The majority of the destinations offer a very similar proposal which make it difficult to stand out in the market. Moreover, local communities often see tourism as a harmful activity, which jeopardises local and endogenous resources.

In order to carry out the present work, an exploratory approach was adopted. A specific literature revision was implemented, applying the technique of content analysis. That was supported by the analysis of secondary datasets about the olive oil sector from official sources. These tasks have allowed outlining a new proposal for the development of innovative initiatives around olive oil in southern Europe.

Once the objective of this research and the justification of its interest have been explained, it is sustentável e participada. Trata-se de sugerir um modelo de gestão turística que pode ser aplicado nas zonas olívicolas do sul da Europa. Os seus previsíveis resultados reverteriam numa melhoria da economia local, do setor agrário e do turismo, bem como outros benefícios indiretos associados à melhoria da qualidade de vida da comunidade local.

Palavras-chave: Turismo do azeite, Territórios olívicolas, Economia do turismo, Marketing turístico, Desenvolvimento rural.